Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/lecturesonrhetor0000hugh

LECTURES

ON

RHETORIC

AND

BELLES LETTRES.

By HUGH BLAIR, D.D. and F.R.S. Edin.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH, AND PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTERS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

A NEW EDITION.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR BELL & BRADFUTE, PETER HILL, AND DOIG & STIRLING EDINBURGH; LACKINGTON, ALLEN, & CO.; SUTTABY, EVANCE, & FOX; T. HAMILTON, AND GEORGE COWIE & CO. LONDON.

1813.

Printed by J. & C. Muirhead

CONTENTS

OF THE

THIRD VOLUME.

Lect.		Page.
XXXV.	Comparative merit of the Ancients and the Moderns—Historical Writing.....	1
XXXVI.	Historical Writing.....	27
XXXVII.	Philosophical Writing—Dialogue—Epistolary Writing—Fictitious History.....	54
XXXVIII.	Nature of Poetry--Its Origin and Progress—Versification.....	97
XXXIX.	Pastoral Poetry—Lyric Poetry.....	107
XL.	Didactic Poetry—Descriptive Poetry	137
XLI.	The Poetry of the Hebrews.....	165
XLII.	Epic Poetry.....	190
XLIII.	Homer's Iliad and Odyssey—Virgil's Æneid.....	216
XLIV.	Lucan's Pharsalia—Tasso's Jerusalem—Camoen's Lusiad—Fenelon's Telemachus—Voltaire's Henriade—Milton's Paradise Lost.....	242

Lect.		Page.
XLV.	Dramatic Poetry—Tragedy	272
XLVI.	Tragedy—Greek—French—English Tragedy	302
XLVII.	Comedy—Greek and Roman—French—English Comedy	332

LECTURE XXXV.

COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS—HISTORICAL WRITING.

I HAVE now finished that part of the course which respected oratory or public speaking, and which, as far as the subject allowed, I have endeavoured to form into some sort of system. It remains, that I enter on the consideration of the most distinguished kinds of composition, both in prose and verse, and point out the principles of criticism relating to them. This part of the work might easily be drawn out to a great length; but I am sensible, that critical discussions, when they are pursued too far, become both trifling and tedious. I shall study, therefore, to avoid unnecessary prolixity; and hope, at the same time, to omit nothing that is very material under the several heads.

I SHALL follow the same method here which I have all along pursued, and without which these

Lectures could not be entitled to any attention; that is, I shall freely deliver my own opinion on every subject; regarding authority no farther, than as it appears to me founded on good sense and reason. In former Lectures, as I have often quoted several of the ancient classics for their beauties, so I have also, sometimes, pointed out their defects. Hereafter, I shall have occasion to do the same, when treating of their writings under more general heads. It may be fit, therefore, that, before I proceed farther, I make some observations on the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns; in order that we may be able to ascertain rationally, upon what foundation that deference rests, which has so generally been paid to the ancients. These observations are the more necessary, as this subject has given rise to no small controversy in the republic of letters; and they may, with propriety, be made now, as they will serve to throw light on some things I have afterwards to deliver, concerning different kinds of composition.

It is a remarkable phenomenon, and one which has often employed the speculations of curious men, that writers and artists, most distinguished for their parts and genius, have generally appeared in considerable numbers at a time. Some ages have been remarkably barren in them; while, at other periods, Nature seems to have exerted herself with a more than ordinary effort, and to have

poured them forth with a profuse fertility. Various reasons have been assigned for this. Some of the moral causes lie obvious; such as favourable circumstances of government and of manners; encouragement from great men; emulation excited among the men of genius. But as these have been thought inadequate to the whole effect, physical causes have been also assigned; and the Abbé du Bos, in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, has collected a great many observations on the influence which the air, the climate, and other such natural causes, may be supposed to have upon genius. But whatever the causes be, the fact is certain, that there have been certain periods or ages of the world much more distinguished than others, for the extraordinary productions of genius.

LEARNED men have marked out four of these happy ages. The first is the Grecian age, which commenced near the time of the Peloponnesian war, and extended till the time of Alexander the Great; within which period, we have Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Æschines, Lysias, Isocrates, Pindar, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lysippus, Appelles, Phidias, Praxiteles. The second is the Roman age, included nearly within the days of Julius Cæsar and Augustus; affording us Catullus, Lucretius, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Tibullus,

Propertius, Ovid, Phædrus, Cæsar, Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Varro, and Vitruvius. The third age is, that of the restoration of learning, under the Popes Julius II. and Leo X.; when flourished Ariosto, Tasso, Sannazarius, Vida, Machiavel, Guicciardini, Davila, Erasmus, Paul Jovius, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The fourth, comprehends the age of Louis XIV. and Queen Anne, when flourished in France, Corneille, Racine, De Retz, Moliere, Boileau, Fontaine, Baptiste, Rousseau, Bossuet, Fenelon, Bourdaloue, Pascall, Malebranche, Massillon, Bruyere, Bayle, Fontenelle, Vertot; and in England, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Prior, Swift, Parnell, Arbuthnot, Congreve, Otway, Young, Rowe, Atterbury, Shaftsbury, Bolingbroke, Tillotson, Temple, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clarke.

When we speak comparatively of the ancients and the moderns, we generally mean by the ancients, such as lived in the two first of these periods, including also one or two who lived more early, as Homer in particular; and by the moderns, those who flourished in the two last of these ages, including also the eminent writers down to our own times. Any comparison between these two classes of writers must necessarily be vague and loose, as they comprehend so many, and of such different kinds and degrees of genius. But the comparison is generally made to turn, by those who are fond of making it, upon two or

three of the most distinguished in each class. With much heat it was agitated in France, between Boileau and Mad. Dacier, on the one hand, for the ancients; and Perault and La Motte, on the other, for the moderns; and it was carried to extremes on both sides. To this day, among men of taste and letters, we find a leaning to one or other side. A few reflections may throw light upon the subject, and enable us to discern upon what grounds we are to rest our judgment in this controversy.

If any one, at this day, in the eighteenth century takes upon him to decry the ancient classics; if he pretends to have discovered that Homer and Virgil are poets of inconsiderable merit, and that Demosthenes and Cicero are not great orators, we may boldly venture to tell such a man, that he is come too late with his discovery. The reputation of such writers is established upon a foundation too solid, to be now shaken by any arguments whatever; for it is established upon the almost universal taste of mankind, proved and tried throughout the succession of so many ages. Imperfections in their works he may indeed point out; passages that are faulty he may shew; for where is the human work that is perfect? But, if he attempts to discredit their works in general, or to prove that the reputation which they have gained is, on the whole, unjust, there is an argument against him, which is equal to full demon-

stration. He must be in the wrong; for human nature is against him. In matters of taste, such as poetry and oratory, to whom does the appeal lie? where is the standard? and where the authority of the last decision? where is it to be looked for, but, as I formerly shewed, in those feelings and sentiments that are found, on the most extensive examination, to be the common sentiments and feelings of men? These have been fully consulted on this head. The public, the unprejudiced public, has been tried and appealed to for many centuries, and throughout almost all civilized nations. It has pronounced its verdict; it has given its sanction to these writers; and from this tribunal there lies no farther appeal.

In matters of mere reasoning, the world may be long in an error; and may be convinced of the error by stronger reasonings, when produced. Positions that depend upon science, upon knowledge, and matters of fact, may be overturned according as science and knowledge are enlarged, and new matters of fact are brought to light. For this reason a system of philosophy receives no sufficient sanction from its antiquity, or long currency. The world, as it grows older, may be justly expected to become, if not wiser, at least more knowing; and supposing it doubtful, whether Aristotle or Newton were the greater genius, yet Newton's philosophy may prevail over Aristotle's by means of later discoveries, to which

Aristotle was a stranger. But nothing of this kind holds as to matters of taste; which depend not on the progress of knowledge and science, but upon sentiment and feeling. It is in vain to think of undeceiving mankind, with respect to errors committed here, as in philosophy. For the universal feeling of mankind is the natural feeling; and because it is the natural, it is, for that reason, the right feeling. The reputation of the Iliad and the Æneid must therefore stand upon sure ground, because it has stood so long; though that of the Aristotelian or Platonic philosophy, every one is at liberty to call in question.

IT is in vain also to alledge, that the reputation of the ancient poets and orators, is owing to authority, to pedantry, and to the prejudices of education, transmitted from age to age. These, it is true, are the authors put into our hands at schools and colleges, and by that means we have now an early prepossession in their favour; but how came they to gain the possession of colleges and schools? Plainly by the high fame which these authors had among their own contemporaries. For the Greek and Latin were not always dead languages. There was a time when Homer, and Virgil, and Horace, were viewed in the same light, as we now view Dryden, Pope, and Addison. It is not to commentators and universities that the classics are indebted for their fame. They became classics and school-books, in conse-

quence of the high admiration which was paid them by the best judges in their own country and nation. As early as the days of Juvenal, who wrote under the reign of Domitian, we find Virgil and Horace become the standard books in the education of youth.

> Quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset
> Flaccus, et hæreret nigro fuligo Maroni *.
>
> SAT. 7.

FROM this general principle, then, of the reputation of the great ancient classics being so early, so lasting, so extensive, among all the most polished nations, we may justly and boldly infer that their reputation cannot be wholly unjust, but must have a solid foundation in the merit of their writings.

LET us guard, however, against a blind and implicit veneration for the ancients, in every thing. I have opened the general principle which must go far in instituting a fair comparison between them and the moderns. Whatever superiority the ancients may have had in point of genius, yet in all arts, where the natural progress of knowledge

---

* "Then thou art bound to smell, on either hand,
"As many stinking lamps, as school-boys stand,
"When Horace could not read in his own sully'd book,
"And Virgil's sacred page was all besmear'd with smoke."

DRYDEN.

has had room to produce any considerable effects, the moderns cannot but have some advantage. The world may, in certain respects, be considered as a person, who must needs gain somewhat by advancing in years. Its improvements have not, I confess, been always in proportion to the centuries that have passed over it; for, during the course of some ages, it has sunk as into a total lethargy. Yet, when roused from that lethargy, it has generally been able to avail itself, more or less, of former discoveries. At intervals, there arose some happy genius, who could both improve on what had gone before, and invent something new. With the advantage of a proper stock of materials, an inferior genius can make greater progress, than a much superior one, to whom these materials are wanting.

HENCE, in natural philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences that depend on an extensive knowledge and observation of facts, modern philosophers have an unquestionable superiority over the ancient. I am inclined also to think, that in matters of pure reasoning, there is more precision among the moderns, than in some instances there was among the ancients; owing perhaps to a more extensive literary intercourse, which has improved and sharpened the faculties of men. In some studies too, that relate to taste and fine writing, which is our object, the progress of society must, in equity, be admitted to have

given us some advantages. For instance, in history, there is certainly more political knowledge in several European nations at present than there was in ancient Greece and Rome. We are better acquainted with the nature of government, because we have seen it under a great variety of forms and revolutions. The world is more laid open than it was in former times; commerce is greatly enlarged; more countries are civilized; posts are every where established; intercourse is become more easy; and the knowledge of facts, by consequence, more attainable. All these are great advantages to historians; of which, in some measure, as I shall afterwards show, they have availed themselves. In the more complex kinds of poetry, likewise, we may have gained somewhat, perhaps, in point of regularity and accuracy. In dramatic performances, having the advantage of the ancient models, we may be allowed to have made some improvements in the variety of the characters, the conduct of the plot, attention to probability, and to decorums.

THESE seem to me the chief points of superiority we can plead above the ancients. Neither do they extend as far, as might be imagined at first view. For if the strength of genius be on one side, it will go far, in works of taste at least, to counterbalance all the artificial improvements which can be made by greater knowledge and correctness. To return to our comparison of the age of the

world with that of a man; it may be said, not altogether without reason, that if the advancing age of the world bring along with it more science and more refinement, there belong, however, to its earlier periods, more vigour, more fire, more enthusiasm of genius. This appears indeed to form the characteristical difference between the ancient poets, orators, and historians, compared with the modern. Among the ancients, we find higher conceptions, greater simplicity, more original fancy. Among the moderns, sometimes more art and correctness, but feebler exertions of genius. But though this be in general a mark of distinction between the ancients and moderns, yet, like all general observations, it must be understood with some exceptions; for, in point of political fire and original genius, Milton and Shakespeare are inferior to no poets in any age.

IT is proper to observe, that there were some circumstances in ancient times very favourable to those uncommon efforts of genius which were then exerted. Learning was a much more rare and singular attainment in the earlier ages, than it is at present. It was not to schools and universities that the persons applied, who sought to distinguish themselves. They had not this easy recourse. They travelled for their improvement into distant countries, to Egypt, and to the East. They enquired after all the monuments of learning there. They conversed with priests, philoso-

phers, poets, with all who had acquired any distinguished fame. They returned to their own country full of the discoveries which they had made, and fired by the new and uncommon objects which they had seen. Their knowledge and improvements cost them more labour, raised in them more enthusiasm, were attended with higher rewards and honours, than in modern days. Fewer had the means and opportunities of distinguishing themselves; but such as did distinguish themselves, were sure of acquiring that fame, and even veneration, which is of all rewards the greatest incentive to genius. Herodotus read his history to all Greece assembled at the Olympic games, and was publicly crowned. In the Peloponnesian war, when the Athenian army was defeated in Sicily, and the prisoners were ordered to be put to death, such of them as could repeat any verses of Euripides were saved, from honour to that poet, who was a citizen of Athens. These were testimonies of public regard, far beyond what modern manners confer upon genius.

In our times, good writing is considered as an attainment, neither so difficult nor so high and meritorious.

Scribimus indocti, doctique, Poëmata passim.*

---

* "Now every desperate blockhead dares to write,
"Verse is the trade of every living wight."

Francis.

WE write much more supinely, and at our ease, than the ancients. To excel, is become a much less considerable object. Less effort, less exertion is required, because we have many more assistances than they. Printing has rendered all books common, and easy to be had. Education for any of the learned professions can be carried on without much trouble. Hence a mediocrity of genius is spread over all. But to rise beyond that, and to overtop the crowd, is given to few. The multitude of assistances which we have for all kinds of composition, in the opinion of Sir William Temple, a very competent judge, rather depresses than favours the exertions of native genius. "It "is very possible," says that ingenious author, in his Essay on the Ancients and Moderns; "that "men may lose rather than gain by these; may "lessen the force of their own genius, by form- "ing it upon that of others; may have less know- "ledge of their own, for contenting themselves "with that of those before them. So a man that "only translates, shall never be a poet; so people "that trust to others' charity, rather than their "own industry, will always be poor. Who can "tell," he adds, "whether learning may not even "weaken invention, in a man that has great ad- "vantages from nature? Whether the weight "and number of so many other men's thoughts "and notions may not suppress his own; as heap- "ing on wood sometimes suppresses a little spark, "that would otherwise have grown into a flame?

" The strength of mind, as well as of body, grows " more from the warmth of exercise, than of " clothes; nay, too much of this foreign heat ra- " ther makes men faint, and their constitutions " weaker than they would be without them."

FROM whatever cause it happens, so it is, that among some of the ancient writers, we must look for the highest models in most of the kinds of elegant composition. For accurate thinking and enlarged ideas, in several parts of philosophy, to the moderns we ought chiefly to have recourse. Of correct and finished writing in some works of taste, they may afford useful patterns; but for all that belongs to original genius, to spirited, masterly, and high execution, our best and most happy ideas are, generally speaking, drawn from the ancients. In epic poetry, for instance, Homer and Virgil, to this day, stand not within many degrees of any rival. Orators such as Cicero and Demosthenes, we have none. In history, notwithstanding some defects, which I am afterwards to mention in the ancient historical plans, it may be safely asserted, that we have no such historical narration, so elegant, so picturesque, so animated, and interesting as that of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, and Sallust. Although the conduct of the drama may be admitted to have received some improvements, yet for poetry and sentiment we have nothing to equal Sophocles and Euripides; nor any dialogue in comedy, that

comes up to the correct, graceful, and elegant simplicity of Terence. We have no such love elegies as those of Tibullus; no such pastorals as some of Theocritus's: and for lyric poetry, Horace stands quite unrivalled. The name of Horace cannot be mentioned without a particular encomium. That "Curiosa Felicitas," which Petronius has remarked in his expression; the sweetness, elegance, and spirit of many of his odes, the thorough knowledge of the world, the excellent sentiments, and natural easy manner which distinguish his satires and epistles, all contribute to render him one of those very few authors whom one never tires of reading; and from whom alone, were every other monument destroyed, we should be led to form a very high idea of the taste and genius of the Augustan age.

To all such, then, as wish to form their taste, and nourish their genius, let me warmly recommend the assiduous study of the ancient classics, both Greek and Roman:

"Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurna*.

Without a considerable acquaintance with them no man can be reckoned a polite scholar, and he

---

* "Read them by day, and study them by night."
FRANCIS.

will want many assistances for writing and speaking well, which the knowledge of such authors would afford him. Any one has great reason to suspect his own taste, who receives little or no pleasure from the perusal of writings, which so many ages and nations have consented in holding up as objects of admiration. And I am persuaded, it will be found, that in proportion as the ancients are generally studied and admired, or are unknown and disregarded in any country, good taste and good composition will flourish or decline. They are commonly none but the ignorant or superficial who undervalue them.

AT the same time, a just and high regard for the prime writers of antiquity is to be always distinguished from that contempt of every thing which is modern, and that blind veneration for all that has been written in Greek or Latin, which belongs only to pedants. Among the Greek and Roman authors, some assuredly deserve much higher regard than others; nay some are of no great value. Even the best of them lie open occasionally to just censure; for to no human performance is it given to be absolutely perfect. We may, we ought therefore to read them with a distinguishing eye, so as to propose for imitation their beauties only; and it is perfectly consistent with just and candid criticism, to find fault with parts, while, at the same time, it admires the whole.

AFTER these reflections on the ancients and moderns, I proceed to a critical examination of the most distinguished kinds of composition, and the characters of those writers who have excelled in them whether modern or ancient.

THE most general division of the different kinds of composition is, into those written in prose, and those written in verse; which certainly require to be separately considered, because subject to separate laws. I begin, as is most natural, with writings in prose. Of orations, or public discourses of all kinds, I have already treated fully. The remaining species of prose compositions, which assume any such regular form, as to fall under the cognizance of criticism, seem to be chiefly these: Historical writing, philosophical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history. Historical composition shall be first considered; and, as it is an object of dignity, I propose to treat of it at some length.

AS it is the office of an orator to persuade, it is that of an historian to record truth for the instruction of mankind. This is the proper object and end of history, from which may be deduced many of the laws relating to it; and if this object were always kept in view, it would prevent many of the errors into which persons are apt to fall, concerning this species of composition. As the primary end of history is to record truth, impar-

tiality, fidelity, and accuracy, are the fundamental qualities of an historian. He must neither be a panegyrist nor a satirist. He must not enter into faction, nor give scope to affection; but, contemplating past events and characters with a cool and dispassionate eye, must present to his readers a faithful copy of human nature.

At the same time, it is not every record of facts, however true, that is entitled to the name of history; but such a record as enables us to apply the transactions of former ages for our own instruction. The facts ought to be momentous and important; represented in connection with their causes; traced to their effects; and unfolded in clear and distinct order. For wisdom is the great end of history. It is designed to supply the want of experience. Though it enforce not its instructions with the same authority, yet it furnishes us with a greater variety of instructions, than it is possible for experience to afford in the course of the longest life. Its object is, to enlarge our views of the human character, and to give full exercise to our judgment on human affairs. It must not therefore be a tale calculated to please only, and addressed to the fancy. Gravity and dignity are essential characteristics of history; no light ornaments are to be employed, no flippancy of style, no quaintness of wit. But the writer must sustain the character of a wise man, writing for the instruction of posterity; one who has studied to

inform himself well, who has pondered his subject with care, and addresses himself to our judgment, rather than to our imagination. At the same time, historical writing is by no means inconsistent with ornamented and spirited narration. It admits of much high ornament and elegance; but the ornaments must be always consistent with dignity; they should not appear to be sought after; but to rise naturally from a mind animated by the events which it records.

HISTORICAL composition is understood to comprehend under it, annals, memoirs, lives. But these are its inferior subordinate species; on which I shall hereafter make some reflections, when I shall have first considered what belongs to a regular and legitimate work of history. Such a work is chiefly of two kinds. Either the entire history of some state or kingdom through its different revolutions, such as Livy's Roman History; or the history of some one great event, or some portion or period of time which may be considered as making a whole by itself; such as Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, Davila's History of the Civil Wars of France, or Clarendon's of those of England.

IN the conduct and management of his subject, the first attention requisite in an historian, is to give it as much unity as possible: that is, his history should not consist of separate uncon-

nected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle, which shall make the impression on the mind of something that is one, whole and entire. It is inconceivable how great an effect this, when happily executed, has upon a reader, and it is surprising that some able writers of history have not attended to it more. Whether pleasure or instruction be the end sought by the study of history, either of them is enjoyed to much greater advantage, when the mind has always before it the progress of some one great plan or system of actions; when there is some point or centre, to which we can refer the various facts related by the historian.

In general histories, which record the affairs of a whole nation or empire throughout several ages, this unity, I confess, must be more imperfect. Yet even there, some degree of it can be preserved by a skilful writer. For though the whole, taken together, be very complex, yet the great constituent parts of it, form so many subordinate wholes, when taken by themselves; each of which can be treated both as complete within itself, and as connected with what goes before and follows. In the history of a monarchy, for instance, every reign should have its own unity; a beginning, a middle, and an end, to the system of affairs; while, at the same time, we are taught to discern how that system of affairs rose from the preceding, and how it is inserted into what

follows. We should be able to trace all the secret links of the chain, which binds together remote, and seemingly unconnected events. In some kingdoms of Europe, it was the plan of many successive Princes to reduce the power of their nobles; and during several reigns, most of the leading actions had a reference to this end. In other states, the rising power of the commons, influenced for a tract of time the course and connection of public affairs. Among the Romans, the leading principle was a gradual extension of conquest, and the attainment of universal empire. The continual increase of their power, advancing towards this end from small beginnings, and by a sort of regular progressive plan, furnished to Livy a happy subject for historical unity, in the midst of a great variety of transactions.

Of all the ancient general historians, the one who had the most exact idea of this quality of historical composition, though in other respects not an elegant writer, is Polybius. This appears from the account he gives of his own plan in the beginning of his third book; observing that the subject of which he had undertaken to write, is, throughout the whole of it, one action, one great spectacle; how, and by what causes, all the parts of the habitable world became subject to the Roman Empire. "This action," says he, "is distinct in its begin-"ning, determined in its duration, and clear in its "final accomplishment; therefore, I think it of use,

" to give a general view before-hand, of the chief " constituent parts which make up this whole." In another place, he congratulates himself on his good fortune, in having a subject for history, which allowed such variety of parts to be united under one view; remarking, that before this period, the affairs of the world were scattered, and without connection; whereas, in the times of which he writes, all the great transactions of the world tended and verged to one point, and were capable of being considered as parts of one system. Whereupon he adds several very judicious observations, concerning the usefulness of writing history upon such a comprehensive and connected plan; comparing the imperfect degree of knowledge, which is afforded by particular facts without general views, to the imperfect idea which one would entertain of an animal, who had beheld its separate parts only, without having ever seen its entire form and structure.*

---

* Καθύλα μὲν γαρ ἐμοιγε δοκοῦσιν οἱ πεπεισμένοι διὰ της κατα μέρος ἱστορίας μετρίως συνόψέσθαι τὰ ὁλὰ, παραπλήσίον τι πάσχειν, ὥς ἄν ἰι τινες ἐμψύχε και καλῆ σώματος γεγονότος διερρομένα τα μερη θεώ μενοι, νομίζοιεν ἱκαιῶς αυτόπται γιγνεσθαι της ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ τε ζώου και καλλονης. ἰι γὰς τις αὐτίκα μαλα συνθείς και τέλειον ἄυθις ἀπεργασαμενος το ζῶον, τῳ τε ειδει δε τῆ πῆς ψυχης ευτρεπεία, κἄπειτα παλιν επιδείκνυοι τοῖς αὐτοίς εκείνοις, ταχεως ἄν οἶμαι πάντας ἀυτούς ὁμολογήσειν διο τι και γίαν πολυ τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπελειποντο προσθὲν, και παραπλήσιον τοῖς ὀνειρώτλουσιν ἦσαν. ἔννοιαν μὲν γὰρ λαθεῖν απο μερεως τῶν ὅλων δυνατόν. ἐπιστήμην δε καὶ γνώμην ἀτρεκῆ ἔχειν ἀδύνατον. διο παντελῶς βραχυ τι νομιστέον συμ-ξαλλεσθαι τήν κατὰ μέρος ἱστορίαν προς τῆν τῶν ὅλων ἐμπειρίαν καὶ πίστιν,

SUCH as write the history of some particular great transaction, as confine themselves to one æra, or one portion of the history of a nation, have so great advantages for preserving historical unity, that they are inexcusable if they fail in it. Sallust's histories of the Catilinarian and Jugurthine wars, Xenophon's Cyropædia, and his retreat of the ten thousand, are instances of particular histories, where the unity of historical object is perfectly well maintained. Thucydides, otherwise a writer of great strength and dignity, has failed much, in this article, in his history of the Peloponnesian war. No one great object is properly pursued, and kept in view; but his narration is cut down into small pieces; his history is divided by summers and winters, and we are every now and then leaving transactions unfinished, and are hurried from place to place, from Athens to Sicily, from thence to Peloponnesus, to Corcyra, to Mitylene, that we may be told of what is going on in all these places. We have a great many disjointed parts, and scattered limbs, which with difficulty we collect into one body; and through this faulty distribution and management of his subject, that judicious historian becomes more tiresome, and less agreeable than he would

---

ἐκ μέν τοιγε τῆς ἁπάντων ὡρος ἄλληλα συμπλοκῆς καὶ παραθέσεως, ἔτι δ' ὁμοιότητος καὶ διαφορᾶς μόνως ἄν τις ἐφίκοιτο καὶ δυνηθείη κατοπτεύσας ἅμα καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνόν, ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας γαθεῖν.

POLYB. Histor. Prim.

otherwise be. For these reasons he is severely censured by one of the best critics of antiquity, Dionysius of Halicarnassus*.

---

* The censure which Dionysius passes upon Thucydides, is in several articles carried too far. He blames him for the choice of his subject, as not sufficiently splendid and agreeable, and as abounding too much in crimes and melancholy events, on which he observes that Thucydides loves to dwell. He is partial to Herodotus, whom, both for the choice and the conduct of his subject, he prefers to the other historian. It is true, that the subject of Thucydides wants the gaiety and splendour of that of Herodotus; but it is not deficient in dignity. The Peloponnesian war was the contest between two great rival powers, the Athenian and Lacedemonian states, for the empire of Greece. Herodotus loves to dwell on prosperous incidents, and retains somewhat of the amusing manner of the ancient poetical historians. But Herodotus wrote to the imagination, Thucydides writes to the understanding. He was a grave reflecting man, well acquainted with human life; and the melancholy events and catastrophes, which he records, are often both the most interesting parts of history, and the most improving to the heart.

The critic's observations on the faulty distribution which Thucydides makes of his subject, are better founded, and his preference of Herodotus, in this respect, is not unjust—Θουκυδιδης μεν τοις χρονοις ακολουθων, Ηροδοτος δε ταις περιοχαις των πραγματων, γινεται Θουκυδιδης ασαφης και δυσπαρακολουθητος· πολλων γαρ κατα το αυτο θερος και χειμωνα γιγνωμενων εν διαφοραις τοποις, ημιτελεις τας προτας αρχας καταλιπων, ετερων απτεται των κατα το αυτο θερος και χειμωνα γιγνομενων. πλανωμεθα δη καθαπερ εικος, και δυσκολως τοις δηλουμενοις παρακολουθουμεν. Συμβεβηκε Θουκυδιδη μιαν υποθεσιν λαβοντι πολλα ποιησαι μερη το εν σωμα Ηροδοτω δε τας πολλας και ουδεν ενοχλουσας υποθεσεις προειλομενω, συμφωνον εν σωμα πεποιηκεναι. With re-

THE historian must not indeed neglect chronological order, with a view to render his narration agreeable. He must give a distinct account of the dates and of the coincidence of facts. But he is not under the necessity of breaking off always in the middle of transactions, in order to inform us of what was happening elsewhere at the same time. He discovers no art, if he cannot form some connection among the affairs which he relates, so as to introduce them in a proper train. He will soon tire the reader, if he goes on recording, in strict chronological order, a multitude of separate transactions, connected by nothing else, but their happening at the same time.

THOUGH the history of Herodotus be of greater compass than that of Thucydides, and comprehend a much greater variety of dissimilar parts, he has been more fortunate in joining them together, and digesting them into order. Hence he is a more pleasing writer, and gives a stronger impression of his subject; though, in judgment and accuracy, much inferior to Thucydides. With digressions and episodes he abounds; but when these have any connection with the main subject, and inserted professedly as episodes, the unity of the

---

gard to style, Dionysius gives Thucydides the just praise of energy and brevity, but censures him on many occasions, not without reason, for harsh and obscure expression, deficient in smoothness and ease.

whole is less violated by them, than by a broken and scattered narration of the principal story. Among the moderns the president Thuanus has, by attempting to make the history of his own times too comprehensive, fallen into the same error, of loading the reader with a great variety of unconnected facts, going on together in different parts of the world; an historian otherwise of great probity, candour, and excellent understanding; but through this want of unity, more tedious, and less interesting than he would otherwise have been.

LECTURE XXXVI.

HISTORICAL WRITING.

AFTER making some observations on the controversy which has been often carried on concerning the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns, I entered, in the last Lecture, on the consideration of historical writing. The general idea of history is, a record of truth for the instruction of mankind. Hence arise the primary qualities required in a good historian, impartiality, fidelity, gravity, and dignity. What I principally considered was, the unity which belongs to this sort of composition; the nature of which I have endeavoured to explain.

I PROCEED next to observe, that in order to fulfil the end of history, the author must study to trace to their springs the actions and events which he records. Two things are especially necessary for his doing this successfully; a thorough acquaintance with human nature, and political knowledge, or acquaintance with government.

The former is necessary to account for the conduct of individuals, and to give just views of their character; the latter to account for the revolutions of government, and the operation of political causes on public affairs. Both must concur, in order to form a completely instructive historian.

WITH regard to the latter article, political knowledge, the ancient writers wanted some advantages which the moderns enjoy; from whom, upon that account, we have a title to expect more accurate and precise information. The world, as I formerly hinted, was more shut up in ancient times, than it is now; there was then less communication among neighbouring states; and by consequence less knowledge of one another's affairs; no intercourse by established posts, or by ambassadors resident at distant courts. The knowledge and materials of the ancient historians, were thereby more limited and circumscribed; and it is to be observed too, that they wrote for their own countrymen only; they had no idea of writing for the instruction of foreigners, whom they despised, or of the world in general; and hence they are less attentive to convey all that knowledge with regard to domestic policy, which we, in distant times, would desire to have learned from them. Perhaps also, though in ancient ages men were abundantly animated with the love of liberty, yet the full extent of the influence of government, and of political causes, was not then so thoroughly scru-

tinized, as it has been in modern times; when a long experience of all the different modes of government has rendered men more enlightened and intelligent, with respect to public affairs.

To these reasons it is owing, that though the ancient historians set before us the particular facts which they relate, in a very distinct and beautiful manner, yet sometimes they do not give us a clear view of all the political causes, which affected the situation of affairs of which they treat. From the Greek historians, we are able to form but an imperfect notion of the strength, the wealth, and the revenues of the different Grecian states, of the causes of several of those revolutions that happened in their government; or of their separate connections and interfering interests. In writing the history of the Romans, Livy had surely the most ample field for displaying political knowledge concerning the rise of their greatness, and the advantages or defects of their government. Yet the instruction in these important articles, which he affords, is not considerable. An elegant writer he is, and a beautiful relater of facts, if ever there was one; but by no means distinguished for profoundness or penetration. Sallust, when writing the history of a conspiracy against the government, which ought to have been altogether a political history, has evidently attended more to the elegance of narration, and the painting of characters, than to the unfolding of secret causes and springs.

Instead of that complete information, which we would naturally have expected from him, of the state of parties in Rome, and of that particular conjuncture of affairs, which enabled so desperate a profligate as Catiline to become so formidable to government, he has given us little more than a general declamatory account of the luxury and corruption of manners in that age, compared with the simplicity of former times.

I BY no means, however, mean to censure all the ancient historians as defective in political information. No historians can be more instructive than Thucydides, Polybius, and Tacitus. Thucydides is grave, intelligent, and judicious; always attentive to give very exact information concerning every operation which he relates; and to shew the advantages or disadvantages of every plan that was proposed and every measure that was pursued. Polybius excels in comprehensive political views, in penetration into great systems, and in his profound and distinct knowledge of all military affairs. Tacitus is eminent for his knowledge of the human heart; is sentimental and refined in a high degree; conveys much instruction with respect to political matters, but more with respect to human nature.

BUT when we demand from the historian profound and instructive views of his subject, it is not meant that he should be frequently interrupting

the course of his history, with his own reflections and speculations. He should give us all the information that is necessary for our fully understanding the affairs which he records. He should make us acquainted with the political constitution, the force, the revenues, the internal state of the country of which he writes; and with its interests and connections in respect of neighbouring countries. He should place us, as on an elevated station, whence we may have an extensive prospect of all the causes that co-operate in bringing forward the events which are related. But having put into our hands all the proper materials for judgment, he should not be too prodigal of his own opinions and reasonings. When an historian is much given to dissertation, and is ready to philosophise and speculate on all that he records, a suspicion naturally arises, that he will be in hazard of adapting his narrative of facts to favour some system which he has formed to himself. It is rather by fair and judicious narration, that history should instruct us, than by delivering instruction in an avowed and direct manner. On some occasions, when doubtful points require to be scrutinized, or when some great event is in agitation, concerning the causes or circumstances of which mankind have been much divided, the narrative may be allowed to stand still for a little; the historian may appear, and may with propriety enter into some weighty discussion. But he

must take care not to cloy his readers with such discussions, by repeating them too often.

WHEN observations are to be made concerning human nature in general, or the peculiarities of certain characters, if the historian can artfully incorporate such observations with his narrative, they will have a better effect than when they are delivered as formal detached reflections. For instance, in the life of Agricola, Tacitus, speaking of Domitian's treatment of Agricola, makes this observation: "Proprium humani ingenii est, odisse "quem læseris*." The observation is just and well applied; but the form in which it stands, is abstract and philosophical. A thought of the same kind has a finer effect elsewhere in the same historian, when speaking of the jealousies which Germanicus knew to be entertained against him by Livia and Tiberius: "Anxius," says he, "occultis in se patrui aviæque odiis, quorum causæ "acriores quia iniquæ†." Here a profound moral observation is made; but it is made without the appearance of making it in form; it is introduced as a part of the narration, in assigning a reason for the anxiety of Germanicus. We have another instance of the same kind, in the account which

---

* "It belongs to human nature to hate the man whom you "have injured."

† "Uneasy in his mind, on account of the concealed hatred "entertained against him by his uncle and grandmother, which "was the more bitter because the cause of it was unjust."

he gives of a mutiny raised against Rufus, who was a "Præfectus Castrorum," on account of the severe labour which he imposed on the soldiers. "Quippe Rufus, diu manipularis, dein centurio, "mox castris præfectus, antiquam duramque mi- "litiam revocabat, vetus operis et laboris, et eo "immitior quia toleraverat*." There was room for turning this into a general observation, that they who have been educated and hardened in toils, are commonly found to be the most severe in requiring the like toils from others. But the manner in which Tacitus introduces this sentiment as a stroke in the character of Rufus, gives it much more life and spirit. This historian has a particular talent of intermixing after this manner, with the course of his narrative, many striking sentiments and useful observations.

LET us next proceed to consider the proper qualities of historical narration. It is obvious that on the manner of narration much must depend, as the first notion of history is the recital of past facts; and how much one mode of recital may be preferable to another, we shall soon be convinced, by thinking of the different effects,

* "For Rufus, who had long been a common soldier, after- "wards a centurion, and at length a general officer, restored the "severe military discipline of ancient times. Grown old amidst "toils and labours, he was the more rigid in imposing them, be- "cause he had been accustomed to bear them."

which the same story, when told by two different persons, is found to produce.

THE first virtue of historical narration, is clearness, order, and due connection. To attain this, the historiam must be completely master of his subject; he must see the whole as at one view; and comprehend the chain and dependence of all its parts, that he may introduce every thing in its proper place; that he may lead us smoothly along the track of affairs which are recorded, and may always give us the satisfaction of seeing how one event arises out of another. Without this, there can be neither pleasure nor instruction, in reading history. Much for this end will depend on the observance of that unity in the general plan and conduct, which, in the preceding Lecture, I recommended. Much too will depend on the proper management of transitions, which forms one of the chief ornaments of this kind of writing, and is one of the most difficult in execution. Nothing tries an historian's abilities more, than so to lay his train beforehand, as to make us pass naturally and agreeably from one part of his subject to another; to employ no clumsy and awkward junctures; and to contrive ways and means of forming some union among transactions, which seem to be most widely separated from one another.

IN the next place, as history is a very dignified species of composition, gravity must always be

maintained in the narration. There must be no meanness nor vulgarity in the style; no quaint, nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness, or of wit. The smart, or the sneering manner of telling a story, is inconsistent with the historical character. I do not say, that an historian is never to let himself down. He may sometimes do it with propriety, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if it be perfectly uniform is apt to become tiresome. But he should be careful never to descend too far; and, on occasions where a light or ludicrous anecdote is proper to be recorded, it is generally better to throw it into a note, than to hazard becoming too familiar by introducing it into the body of the work.

BUT an historian may profess these qualities of being perspicuous, distinct and grave, and may notwithstanding be a dull writer; in which case we shall reap little benefit from his labours. We shall read him without pleasure; or, most probably, we shall soon give over reading him at all. He must therefore study to render his narration interesting; which is the quality that chiefly distinguishes a writer of genius and eloquence.

TWO things are especially conducive to this; the first is, a just medium in the conduct of narration, between a rapid or crowded recital of facts, and a prolix detail. The former embarrasses, and the latter tires us. An historian that would interest

us, must know when to be concise, and where he ought to enlarge; passing concisely over slight and unimportant events, but dwelling on such as are striking and considerable in their nature, or pregnant with consequences; preparing beforehand our attention to them, and bringing them forth into the most full and conspicuous light. The next thing he must attend to, is a proper selection of the circumstances belonging to those events which he chooses to relate fully. General facts make a slight impression on the mind. It is by means of circumstances and particulars properly chosen, that a narration becomes interesting and affecting to the reader. These give life, body, and colouring to the recital of facts, and enable us to behold them as present, and passing before our eyes. It is this employment of circumstance, in narration, that is properly termed historical painting.

In all these virtues of narration, particularly in this last, of picturesque descriptive narration, several of the ancient historians eminently excel. Hence, the pleasure that is found in reading Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. They are all conspicuous for the art of narration. Herodotus is, at all times, an agreeable writer, and relates every thing with that *naiveté* and simplicity of manner, which never fails to interest the reader. Though the manner of Thucydides be more dry and harsh, yet on great occasions, as when he is giving an account of the

plague of Athens, the siege of Platæa, the sedition in Corcyra, the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily, he displays a very strong and masterly power of description. Xenophon's Cyropædia, and his Anabasis, or Retreat of the Ten Thousand, are extremely beautiful. The circumstances are finely selected, and the narration is easy and engaging; but his Hellenics, or Continuation of the history of Thucydides, is a much inferior work. Sallust's Art of Historical Painting in his Catilinarian, but, more especially in his Jugurthine War, is well known; though his style is liable to censure, as too studied and affected.

LIVY is more unexceptionable in his manner; and is excelled by no historian whatever in the art of narration; several remarkable examples might be given from him. His account, for instance, of the famous defeat of the Roman army by the Samnites, at the Furcæ Caudinæ, in the beginning of the ninth book, affords one of the most beautiful exemplifications of historical painting, that is any where to be met with. We have first an exact description of the narrow pass between two mountains, into which the enemy had decoyed the Romans. When they find themselves caught, and no hope of escape left, we are made to see, first, their astonishment, next, their indignation, and then, their dejection, painted in the most lively manner, by such circumstances and actions as were natural to persons in their situation.

The restless and unquiet manner in which they pass the night; the consultations of the Samnites; the various measures proposed to be taken; the messages between the two armies, all heighten the scene. At length, in the morning, the consuls return to the camp, and inform them that they could receive no other terms but that of surrendering their arms. and passing under the yoke, which was considered as the last mark of ignominy for a conquered army. Part of what then follows, I shall give in the author's own words. "Redinte- "gravit luctum in castris consulum adventus; ut "vix ab iis abstinerent manus, quorum temeritate "in eum locum deducti essent. Alii alios intueri, "contemplari arma mox tradenda, et inermes fu- "turas dextras; proponere sibimet ipsi ante ocu- "los, jugum hostile, et ludibria victoris, et vultus "superbos, et per armatos inermium iter. Inde "fædi agminis miserabilem viam; per sociorum "urbes reditum in patriam ac parentes quo sæpe "ipsi triumphantes venissent. Se solos sine vul- "nere, sine ferro, sine acie victos; sibi non strin- "gere licuisse gladios, non manum cum hoste "conserere; sibi nequicquam arma, nequicquam "vires, nequicquam animos datos. Hæc fremen- "tibus hora fatalis ignominiæ advenit. Jampri- "mùm cum singulis vestimentis, inermes extra "vallum abire jussi. Tum a consulibus abire "lictores jussi, paludamentaque detracta. Tan- "tam hoc inter ipsos, qui paulo ante eos deden- "dos, laccrandosque censuerant, miserationem

" fecit, ut suæ quisque conditionis oblitus, ab illa " deformatione tantæ majestatis, velut ab nefando " spectaculo, averteret oculos. Primi consules, " prope seminudi, sub jugum missi*," &c. The

---

* " The arrival of the consuls in the camp, wrought up their " passions to such a degree, that they could scarcely abstain from " laying violent hands on them, as by their rashness they had " been brought into this situation. They began to look on one " another; to cast a melancholy eye on their arms, which were " now to be surrendered, and on their right hands, which were " to become defenceless. The yoke under which they were to " pass; the scoffs of the conquerors; and their haughty looks " when disarmed and stripped, they should be led through the " hostile lines; all rose before their eyes. They then looked " forward to the sad journey which awaited them, when they " were to pass as a vanquished and disgraced army through the " territories of their allies, by whom they had often been beheld " returning in triumph to their families and native land. They " alone, they muttered to one another, without an engagement, " without a single blow, had been conquered. To their hard fate " it fell, never to have had it in their power to draw a sword, or " to look an enemy in the face; to them only, arms, strength, and " courage, had been given in vain. While they were thus giv- " ing vent to their indignation, the fatal moment of their igno- " miny arrived. First, they were all commanded to come forth " from the camp, without armour, and in a single garment. Next, " orders were given, that the consuls should be left without their " lictors, and that they should be stripped of their robes. Such " commiseration did this affront excite among them, who, but a " little before, had been for delivering up those very consuls to " the enemy, and for putting them to death, that every one for- " got his own condition, and turned his eyes aside from this infa- " mous disgrace, suffered by the consular dignity, as from a spec- " tacle which was too detestable to be beheld. The consuls, al- " most half-naked, were first made to pass under the yoke," &c.

rest of the story, which it would be too long to insert, is carried on with the same beauty, and full of picturesque circumstances*.

TACITUS is another author eminent for historical painting, though in a manner altogether different from that of Livy. Livy's descriptions are more full, more plain, and natural; those of Tacitus consist in a few bold strokes. He selects one or two remarkable circumstances, and sets them

---

* The description which Cæsar gives of the consternation occasioned in his camp, by the accounts which were spread among his troops, of the ferocity, the size, and the courage of the Germans, affords an instance of historical painting, executed in a simple manner; and, at the same time, exhibiting a natural and lively scene. "Dum paucos dies ad Vesontionem moratur, ex percunctatione "nostrorum, vocibusque Gallorum ac mercatorum, qui ingenti "magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili virtute, atque ex- "ercitatione in armis esse prædicabant; sæpe numero sese cum "iis congressos, ne vultum quidem atque aciem oculorum ferre "potuisse; tantus subito terror omnem exercitum occupavit, ut "non mediocriter omnium mentes animosque perturbaret. Hic "primum ortus est a tribunis militum, ac præfectis, reliquisque "qui ex urbe, amicitiæ causa, Cæsarem secuti, suum periculum "miserabantur, quod non magnum in re militari usum habebant "quorum alius, aliâ causâ illatâ quam sibi ad proficiscendum ne- "cessariam esse diceret, petebat ut ejus voluntate discedere liceret. "Nonnulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem vitarent, re- "manebant. Hi neque vultum fingere, neque interdum lacry- "mas tenere poterant. Abditi in tabernaculis, aut suum fatum "querebantur, aut cum familiaribus suis, commune periculum "miserabantur. Vulgo, totis castris testamenta obsignabantur."

DE BELL. GALL. L. I.

before us in a strong, and, generally, in a new and uncommon light. Such is the following picture of the situation of Rome, and of the Emperor Galba, when Otho was advancing against him: "Agebatur huc illuc Galba, vario turbæ fluctu- "antis impulsu, completis undique basilicis et "templis, lugubri prospectu. Neque populi aut "plebis ulla vox; sed attoniti vultus, et conversæ "ad omnia aures. Non tumultus, non quies; sed "quale magni metûs, et magnæ iræ, silentium "est.*" No image in any poet, is more strong and expressive than this last stroke of the description: "Non tumultis, non quies; sed quale," &c. This is a conception of the sublime kind, and discovers high genius. Indeed, throughout all his work, Tacitus shews the hand of a master. As he is profound in reflection, so he is striking in description, and pathetic in sentiment. The philosopher, the poet, and the historian all meet in him. Though the period of which he writes may be reckoned unfortunate for an historian, he has made it afford us many interesting exhibitions of human nature. The relations which he gives of the deaths of se-

* "Galba was driven to and fro by the tide of the multitude, "shoving him from place to place. The temples and public "buildings were filled with crowds of a dismal appearance. No "clamours were heard, either from the citizens, or from the rab- "ble. Their countenances were filled with consternation; their "ears were employed in listening with anxiety. It was not a tu- "mult; it was not quietness; it was the silence of terror, and of "wrath."

veral eminent personages are as affecting as the deepest tragedies. He paints with a glowing pencil; and possesses, beyond all writers, the talent of painting, not to the imagination merely, but to the heart. With many of the most distinguished beauties, he is, at the same time, not a perfect model for history; and such as have formed themselves upon him, have seldom been successful. He is to be admired, rather than imitated. In his reflections, he is too refined; in his style, too concise, sometimes quaint and affected, often abrupt and obscure. History seems to require a more natural, flowing, and popular manner.

THE ancients employed one embellishment of history which the moderns have laid aside, I mean Orations, which on weighty occasions, they put into the mouths of some of their chief personages. By means of these, they diversified their history, they conveyed both moral and political instruction; and, by the opposite arguments which were employed, they gave us a view of the sentiments of different parties. Thucydides was the first who introduced this method. The orations with which his history abounds, and those too of some other Greek and Latin historians, are among the most valuable remains which we have of ancient eloquence. How beautiful soever they are, it may be much questioned, I think, whether they find a proper place in history. I am rather inclined to think, that they are unsuitable to it. For they

form a mixture which is unnatural in history, of fiction with truth. We know that these orations are entirely of the author's own composition, and that he has introduced some celebrated person haranguing in a public place, purely that he might have an opportunity of showing his own eloquence, or delivering his own sentiments, under the name of that person. This is a sort of poetical liberty which does not suit the gravity of history, throughout which, an air of the strictest truth should always reign. Orations may be an embellishment to history; such might also poetical compositions be, introduced under the name of some of the personages mentioned in the narration, who were known to have possessed poetical talents. But neither the one, nor the other, finds a proper place in history. Instead of inserting formal orations, the method adopted by later writers seems better and more natural; that of the historian, on some great occasion, delivering, in his own person, the sentiments and reasonings of the opposite parties, or the substance of what was understood to be spoken in some public assembly; which he may do without the liberty of fiction.

THE drawing of characters is one of the most splendid, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition. For characters are generally considered as professed exhibitions of fine writing; and an historian who seeks to shine in them, is frequently in

danger of carrying refinement to excess, from a desire of appearing very profound and penetrating. He brings together so many contrasts, and subtle oppositions of qualities, that we are rather dazzled with sparkling expressions, than entertained with any clear conception of a human character. A writer who would characterise in an instructive and masterly manner, should be simple in his style, and should avoid all quaintness and affectation; at the same time, not contenting himself with giving us general outlines only, but descending into those peculiarities which make a character in its most strong and distinctive features. The Greek historians sometimes give eulogiums, but rarely draw full and professed characters. The two ancient authors who have laboured this part of historical composition most, are Sallust and Tacitus.

As history is a species of writing designed for the instruction of mankind, sound morality should always reign in it. Both in describing characters, and in relating transactions, the author should always show himself to be on the side of virtue. To deliver moral instruction in a formal manner, falls not within his province; but both as a good man, and as a good writer, we expect, that he should discover sentiments of respect for virtue, and an indignation at flagrant vice. To appear neutral and indifferent with respect to good and bad characters, and to affect a crafty and political, rather than a moral turn of thought, will, besides

other bad effects, derogate greatly from the weight of historical composition, and will render the strain of it much more cold and uninteresting. We are always most interested in the transactions which are going on, when our sympathy is awakened by the story, and when we become engaged in the fate of the actors. But this effect can never be produced by a writer, who is deficient in sensibility and moral feeling.

As the observations which I have hitherto made, have mostly respected the ancient historians, it may naturally be expected that I should also take some notice of the moderns who have excelled in this kind of writing.

THE country in Europe, where the historical genius has, in later ages, shone forth with most lustre, beyond doubt, is Italy. The national character of the Italians, seems favourable to it They were always distinguished as an acute, penetrating, reflecting people, remarkable for political sagacity and wisdom, and who early addicted themselves to the arts of writing. Accordingly, soon after the restoration of letters, Machiavel Guicciardin, Davila, Bentivoglio, Father Paul, became highly conspicuous for historical merit. They all appear to have conceived very just ideas of history; and are agreeable, instructive, and interesting writers. In their manner of narration, they are formed upon the ancients; some of them, as

Bentivoglio and Guicciardin, have, in imitation of them, introduced orations into their history. In the profoundness and distinctness of their political views, they may, perhaps, be esteemed to have surpassed the ancients. Critics have, at the same time, observed some imperfections in each of them. Machiavel, in his history of Florence, is not altogether so interesting as one would expect an author of his abilities to be; either through his own defect, or through some unhappiness in his subject, which led him into a very minute detail of the intrigues of one city. Guicciardin, at all times sensible and profound, is taxed for dwelling so long on the Tuscan affairs as to be sometimes tedious; a defect which is also imputed, occasionally, to the judicious Father Paul. Bentivoglio, in his excellent history of the wars of Flanders, is accused for approaching to the florid and pompous manner: and Davila, though one of the most agreeable and entertaining relaters, has manifestly this defect, of spreading a sort of uniformity over all his characters, by representing them as guided too regularly by political interest. But, although some such objections may be made to these authors, they deserve, upon the whole, to be placed in the first rank of modern historical writers. The Wars of Flanders, written in Latin by Famianus Strada, is a book of some note; but is not entitled to the same reputation as the works of the other historians I have named. Strada is too violently partial to the Spanish cause; and too

open a panegyrist of the Prince of Parma. He is florid, diffused, and an affected imitator of the manner and style of Livy.

AMONG the French, as there has been much good writing in many kinds, so also in the historical. That ingenious nation, who have done so much honour to modern literature, possess, in an eminent degree, the talent of narration. Many of their later historical writers, are spirited, lively, and agreeable; and some of them not deficient in profoundness and penetration. They have not, however, produced any such capital historians as the Italians whom I mentioned above.

OUR island, till within these few years, was not eminent for its historical productions. Early, indeed, Scotland acquired reputation by means of the celebrated Buchanan. He is an elegant writer, classical in his Latinity, and agreeable both in narration and description. But one cannot but suspect him to be more attentive to elegance, than to accuracy. Accustomed to form his political notions wholly upon the plans of ancient governments, the feudal system seems never to have entered into his thoughts; and as this was the basis of the Scottish constitution, his political views are, of course, inaccurate and imperfect. When he comes to the transactions of his own times, there is such a change in his manner of writing, and such an asperity in his style, that on what side

soever the truth lies with regard to those dubious and long controverted facts which make the subject of that part of his work, it is impossible to clear him from being deeply tinctured with the spirit of party.

AMONG the older English historians, the most considerable is Lord Clarendon. Though he writes as the professed apologist of one side, yet there appears more impartiality in his relation of facts, than might at first be expected. A great spirit of virtue and probity runs through his work. He maintains all the dignity of an historian. His sentences, indeed, are often too long, and his general manner is prolix; but his style, on the whole, is manly; and his merit, as an historian. is much beyond mediocrity. Bishop Burnet is lively and perspicuous; but he has hardly any other historical merit. His style is too careless and familiar for history; his characters are, indeed, marked with a bold and strong hand; but they are generally light and satirical; and he abounds so much in little stories concerning himself, that he resembles more a writer of memoirs than of history. During a long period, English historical authors seemed to aim at nothing higher than an exact relation of facts; till of late the distinguished names of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, have raised the British character, in this species of writing, to high reputation and dignity.

I OBSERVED, in the preceding Lecture, that Annals, Memoirs, and Lives, are the inferior kinds of historical composition. It will be proper, before dismissing this subject, to make a few observations upon them. Annals are commonly understood to signify a collection of facts, digested according to chronological order; rather serving for the materials of history, than aspiring to the name of history themselves. All that is required, therefore, in a writer of such annals is to be faithful, distinct, and complete.

MEMOIRS denote a sort of composition, in which an author does not pretend to give full information of all the facts respecting the period of which he writes, but only to relate what he himself had access to know, or what he was concerned in, or what illustrates the conduct of some person, or the circumstances of some transaction, which he chooses for his subject. From a writer of memoirs, therefore, is not expected the same profound research, or enlarged information, as from a writer of history. He is not subject to the same laws of unvarying dignity and gravity. He may talk freely of himself; he may descend into the most familiar anecdotes. What is chiefly required of him is, that he be sprightly and interesting; and, especially, that he inform us of things that are useful and curious; that he convey to us some sort of knowledge worth the acquiring. This is a species of writing very bewitching to such as love to write

concerning themselves, and conceive every transaction, in which they had a share, to be of singular importance. There is no wonder, therefore, that a nation so sprightly as the French, should, for two centuries past, have been pouring forth a whole flood of memoirs; the greatest part of which are little more than agreeable trifles.

SOME, however, must be excepted from this general character; two in particular; the Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and those of the Duke of Sully. From Retz's Memoirs, besides the pleasure of agreeable and lively narration, we may derive also much instruction, and much knowledge of human nature. Though his politics be often too fine spun, yet the memoirs of a professed factious leader, such as the Cardinal was, wherein he draws both his own character, and that of several great personages of his time, so fully, cannot be read by any person of good sense without benefit. The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully, in the state in which they are now given to the public, have great merit, and deserve to be mentioned with particular praise. No memoirs approach more nearly to the usefulness, and the dignity of a full legitimate history. They have this peculiar advantage, of giving us a beautiful display of two of the most illustrious characters, which history presents; Sully himself, one of the ablest and most incorrupt ministers, and Henry IV. one of the greatest and most amiable princes of modern times.

I know few books more full of virtue, and of good sense, than Sully's Memoirs; few, therefore, more proper to form both the heads and the hearts of such as are designed for public business, and action, in the world.

BIOGRAPHY, or the writing of lives, is a very useful kind of composition; less formal and stately than history; but to the bulk of readers, perhaps, no less instructive; as it affords them the opportunity of seeing the characters and tempers, the virtues and failings of eminent men fully displayed; and admits them into a more thorough and intimate acquaintance with such persons, than history generally allows. For a writer of lives may descend, with propriety, to minute circumstances, and familiar incidents. It is expected of him, that he is to give the private, as well as the public life, of the person whose actions he records; nay, it is from private life, from familiar, domestic, and seemingly trivial occurrences, that we often receive most light into the real character. In this species of writing, Plutarch has no small merit; and to him we stand indebted for much of the knowledge that we possess, concerning several of the most eminent personages of antiquity. His matter is, indeed, better than his manner; as he cannot lay claim to any peculiar beauty or elegance. His judgment too, and his accuracy, have sometimes been taxed; but whatever defects of this kind he may be liable to, his lives of eminent

men will always be considered as a valuable treasure of instruction. He is remarkable for being one of the most humane writers of all antiquity; less dazzled than many of them are, with the exploits of valour and ambition; and fond of displaying his great men to us, in the more gentle lights of retirement and private life.

I CANNOT conclude the subject of history without taking notice of a very great improvement which has, of late years, begun to be introduced into historical composition; I mean, a more particular attention than was formerly given to laws, customs, commerce, religion, literature, and every other thing that tends to show the spirit and genius of nations. It is now understood to be the business of an able historian to exhibit manners, as well as facts and events; and assuredly, whatever displays the state and life of mankind, in different periods, and illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful and interesting than the detail of sieges and battles. The person, to whom we are most indebted for the introduction of this improvement into history, is the celebrated M. Voltaire, whose genius has shone with such surprising lustre, in so many different parts of literature. His Age of Louis XIV. was one of the first great productions in this taste, and soon drew throughout all Europe, that general attention, and received that high approbation, which so ingenious and eloquent a production merited. His essay on the

general history of Europe, since the days of Charlemagne, is not to be considered either as a history, or the proper plan of an historical work; but only as a series of observations on the chief events that have happened throughout several centuries, and on the changes that successively took place in the spirit and manners of different nations. Though, in some dates and facts, it may, perhaps, be inaccurate, and is tinged with those particularities which unhappily distinguish Voltaire's manner of thinking on religious subjects, yet it contains so many enlarged and instructive views, as justly to merit the attention of all who either read or write the history of those ages.

LECTURE XXXVII.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING—DIALOGUE—EPISTOLARY WRITING—FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

As history is both a very dignified species of composition, and by the regular form which it assumes, falls directly under the laws of criticism, I discoursed of it fully in the two preceding Lectures. The remaining species of composition, in prose, afford less room for critical observation.

PHILOSOPHICAL writing, for instance, will not lead us into any long discussion. As the professed object of philosophy is to convey instruction, and as they who study it are supposed to do so for instruction, not for entertainment, the style, the form, and dress of such writings, are less material objects. They are objects, however, that must not be wholly neglected. He who attempts to instruct mankind, without studying, at the same time, to engage their attention, and to interest them in his subject by his manner of exhibiting it, is not likely to prove successful. The same

truths, and reasonings, delivered in a dry and cold manner, or with a proper measure of elegance and beauty, will make very different impressions on the minds of men.

IT is manifest that every philosophical writer must study the utmost perspicuity: and, by reflecting on what was formerly delivered on the subject of perspicuity, with respect both to single words, and the construction of sentences, we may be convinced that this is a study which demands considerable attention to the rules of style, and good writing. Beyond mere perspicuity, strict accuracy and precision are required in a philosophical writer. He must employ no words of uncertain meaning, no loose nor indeterminate expressions; and should avoid using words which are seemingly synonymous, without carefully attending to the variation which they make upon the idea.

TO be clear then and precise, is one requisite which we have a title to demand from every philosophical writer. He may possess this quality, and be at the same time a very dry writer. He should therefore study some degree of embellishment, in order to render his composition pleasing and graceful. One of the most agreeable, and one of the most useful embellishments which a philosopher can employ, consists in illustrations taken from historical facts, and the characters of

men. All moral and political subjects naturally afford scope for these; and wherever there is room for employing them, they seldom fail of producing a happy effect. They diversify the composition; they relieve the mind from the fatigue of mere reasoning, and at the same time raise more full conviction than any reasonings produce: for they take philosophy out of the abstract, and give weight to speculation, by shewing its connection with real life, and the actions of mankind.

PHILOSOPHICAL writing admits, besides, of a polished, a neat, and elegant style. It admits of metaphors, comparisons, and all the calm figures of speech, by which an author may convey his sense to the understanding with clearness and force, at the same time that he entertains the imagination. He must take great care, however, that all his ornaments be of the chastest kind, never partaking of the florid or the tumid; which is so unpardonable in a professed philosopher, that it is much better for him to err on the side of naked simplicity, than on that of too much ornament. Some of the ancients, as Plato and Cicero, have left us philosophical treatises composed with much elegance and beauty. Seneca has been long and justly censured for the affectation that appears in his style. He is too fond of a certain brilliant and sparkling manner; of antitheses and quaint sentences. It cannot be denied, at the same time, that he often expresses himself with much liveli-

ness and force; though his style, upon the whole, is far from deserving imitation. In English, Mr. Locke's celebrated Treatise on Human Understanding, may be pointed out as a model, on the one hand, of the greatest clearness and distinctness of philosophical style, with very little approach to ornament: Lord Shaftsbury's writings, on the other hand, exhibit philosophy dressed up with all the ornament which it can admit; perhaps with more than is perfectly suited to it.

PHILOSOPHICAL composition sometimes assumes a form, under which it mingles more with works of taste, when carried on in the way of dialogue and conversation. Under this form the ancients have given us some of their chief philosophical works; and several of the moderns have endeavoured to imitate them. Dialogue writing may be executed in two ways, either as direct conversation, where none but the speakers appear, which is the method that Plato uses; or as the recital of a conversation, where the author himself appears, and gives an accouut of what passed in discourse; which is the method that Cicero generally follows. But though those different methods make some variation in the form, yet the nature of the compositions is at bottom the same in both, and subject to the same laws.

A DIALOGUE, in one or other of these forms, on some philosophical, moral, or critical subject,

when it is well conducted, stands in a high rank among the works of taste; but is much more difficult in the execution than is commonly imagined. For it requires more than merely the introduction of different persons speaking in succession. It ought to be a natural and spirited representation of real conversation; exhibiting the character and manners of the several speakers, and suiting to the character of each that peculiarity of thought and expression which distinguishes him from another. A dialogue thus conducted gives the reader a very agreeable entertainment; as by means of the debate going on among the personages, he receives a fair and full view of both sides of the argument; and is, at the same time, amused with polite conversation, and with a display of consistent and well supported characters. An author, therefore, who has genius for executing such a composition after this manner, has it in his power both to instruct and to please.

BUT the greatest part of modern dialogue writers have no idea of any composition of this sort; and bating the outward forms of conversation, and that one speaks, and another answers, it is quite the same as if the author spoke in person throughout the whole. He sets up a Philotheus, perhaps, and a Philatheos, or an A and a B; who after mutual compliments, and after admiring the fineness of the morning or evening, and the beauty of the prospects around them, enter into confer-

ence concerning some great matter; and all that we know farther of them is, that the one personates the author, a man of learning, no doubt, and of good principles; and the other is a man of straw, set up to propose some trivial objections: over which the first gains a most entire triumph, and leaves his sceptical antagonist at the end much humbled, and, generally, convinced of his error. This is a very frigid and insipid manner of writing; the more so, as it is an attempt toward something which we see the author cannot support. It is the form, without the spirit of conversation. The dialogue serves no purpose, but to make awkward interruptions; and we should with more patience hear the author continuing always to reason himself, and to remove the objections that are made to his principles, than be troubled with the unmeaning appearance of two persons, whom we see to be in reality no more than one.

AMONG the ancients, Plato is eminent for the beauty of his dialogues. The scenery, and the circumstances of many of them are beautifully painted. The characters of the Sophists, with whom Socrates disputed, are well drawn; a variety of personages are exhibited to us; we are introduced into a real conversation, often supported with much life and spirit, after the Socratic manner. For richness and beauty of imagination, no philosophic writer, ancient or modern, is comparable to Plato. The only fault of his imagination is,

such an excess of fertility as allows it sometimes to obscure his judgment. It frequently carries him into allegory, fiction, enthusiasm, and the airy regions of mystical theology. The philosopher is, at times, lost in the poet. But whether we be edified with the matter or not, (and much edification he often affords,) we are always entertained with the manner; and left with a strong impression of the sublimity of the author's genius.

CICERO'S Dialogues, or those recitals of conversations which he has introduced into several of his philosophical and critical works, are not so spirited, nor so characteristical as those of Plato. Yet some, as that "De Oratore" especially, are agreeable and well supported. They show us conversation carried on among some of the principal persons of ancient Rome, with freedom, good-breeding, and dignity. The author of the elegant dialogue "De Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ," which is annexed sometimes to the works of Quinctilian, and sometimes to those of Tacitus, has happily imitated, perhaps has excelled Cicero, in this manner of writing.

LUCIAN is a dialogue writer of much eminence; though his subjects are seldom such as can entitle him to be ranked among philosophical authors. He has given the model of the light and humorous dialogue, and has carried it to great perfection. A character of levity, and at

the same time of wit and penetration, distinguishes all his writings. His great object was, to expose the follies of superstition, and the pedantry of philosophy, which prevailed in his age; and he could not have taken any more successful method for this end, than what he has employed in his dialogues, especially in those of the gods, and of the dead, which are full of pleasantry and satire. In this invention of dialogues of the dead, he has been followed by several modern authors. Fontenelle, in particular, has given us dialogues of this sort, which are sprightly and agreeable; but as for characters, whoever his personages be, they all become Frenchmen in his hands. Indeed, few things in composition are more difficult than in the course of a moral dialogue to exhibit characters properly distinguished. As calm conversation furnishes none of those assistances for bringing characters into light, which the active scenes, and interesting situations of the drama afford. Hence few authors are eminent for characteristical dialogue on grave subjects. One of the most remarkable in the English language, is a writer of the last age, Dr. Henry Moore, in his Divine Dialogues, relating to the foundations of natural religion. Though his style be now in some measure obsolete, and his speakers be marked with the academic stiffness of those times, yet the dialogue is animated by a variety of character, and a sprightliness of conversation, beyond what are commonly met with in writings of this kind.

Bishop Berkley's Dialogues concerning the existence of matter, do not attempt any display of characters; but furnish an instance of a very abstract subject, rendered clear and intelligible by means of conversation properly managed.

I PROCEED next to make some observations on epistolary writing; which possesses a kind of middle place between the serious and amusing species of composition. Epistolary writing appears, at first view, to stretch into a very wide field. For there is no subject whatever, on which one may not convey his thoughts to the public, in the form of a letter. Lord Shaftsbury, for instance, Mr. Harris, and several other writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But this is not sufficient to class such treatises under the head of epistolary composition. Though they bear, in the title page, a Letter to a Friend, after the first address, the friend disappears, and we see that it is in truth, the public with whom the author corresponds. Seneca's epistles are of this sort. There is no probability that they ever passed in correspondence as real letters. They are no other than miscellaneous dissertations on moral subjects; which the author, for his convenience, chose to put into the epistolary form. Even where one writes a real letter on some formal topic, as of moral or religious consolation to a person under distress, such as Sir William Temple has written to the Countess of Essex on the death of her

daughter, he is at liberty, on such occasions, to write wholly as a divine or as a philosopher, and to assume the style and manner of one, without reprehension. We consider the author not as writing a letter, but as composing a discourse suited particularly to the circumstances of some one person.

EPISTOLARY writing becomes a distinct species of composition, subject to the cognizance of criticism only or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind; when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance. Such an intercourse, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of taste. If the subject of the letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even, though there should be nothing very considerable in the subject, yet if the spirit and turn of the correspondence be agreeable; if they be written in a sprightly manner, and with native grace and ease, they may still be entertaining; more especially if there be any thing to interest us in the characters of those who write them. Hence the curiosity which the public has always discovered concerning the letters of eminent persons. We expect in them to discover somewhat of their real character. It is childish indeed to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the author unveiled. Concealment and disguise take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as letters from one friend to

another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in other productions, which are studied for public view. We please ourselves with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his heart.

MUCH, therefore, of the merit, and the agreeableness of epistolary writing, will depend on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the writer. There, if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter, as it is in conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without being studied; when employed so as to season, not to cloy. One who, either in conversation or in letters, affects to shine and to sparkle always, will not please long. The style of letters should not be too highly polished. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. All nicety about words, betrays study; and hence musical periods, and appearances of number and harmony in arrangement, should be carefully avoided in letters. The best letters, are commonly, such as the authors have written with most facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject to warm or

interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolence, which have cost the authors most labour in composing, and which, for that reason, they perhaps consider as their master-pieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the readers.

IT ought, at the same time, to be remembered, that the ease and simplicity which I have recommended in epistolary correspondence, are not to be understood as importing entire carelessness. In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the subject and the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more than what we owe both to ourselves, and to the friend with whom we correspond. A slovenly and negligent manner of writing, is a disobliging mark of want of respect. The liberty, besides, of writing letters with too careless a hand, is apt to betray persons into imprudence in what they write. The first requisite, both in conversation and correspondence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character, and that of others, demand. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen into our hand, we must remember, that, "Litera scripta manet."

PLINY's Letters are one of the most celebrated

collections which the ancients have given us, in the epistolary way. They are elegant and polite; and exhibit a very pleasant and amiable view of the author. But according to the vulgar phrase, they smell too much of the lamp. They are too elegant and fine; and it is not easy to avoid thinking, that the author is casting an eye towards the public, when he is appearing to write only for his friends. Nothing indeed is more difficult, than for an author, who publishes his own letters, to divest himself altogether of attention to the opinion of the world in what he says; by which means, he becomes much less agreeable than a man of parts would be, if, without any constraint of this sort, he were writing to his intimate friend.

CICERO'S Epistles, though not so showy as those of Pliny, are, on several accounts, a far more valuable collection; indeed, the most valuable collection of letters extant in any language. They are letters of real business, written to the greatest men of the age, composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation; and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any intention of being published to the world. For it appears, that Cicero never kept copies of his own letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his freed-man Tyro, for the large collection that was made, after his death, of those which are now extant, amounting to near a thou-

sand *. They contain the most authentic materials of the history of that age; and are the last monuments which remain of Rome in its free state; the greatest part of them being written during that important crisis, when the republic was on the point of ruin; the most interesting situation, perhaps, which is to be found in the affairs of mankind. To his intimate friends, especially to Atticus, Cicero lays open himself and his heart, with entire freedom. In the course of his correspondence with others, we are introduced into acquaintance with several of the principal personages of Rome; and it is remarkable that most of Cicero's correspondents, as well as himself, are elegant and polite writers; which serves to heighten our idea of the taste and manners of that age.

THE most distinguished collection of letters in the English language, is that of Mr. Pope, Dean Swift, and their friends; partly published in Mr. Pope's Works, and partly in those of Dean Swift. This collection is, on the whole, an entertaining and agreeable one; and contains much wit and refinement. It is not, however, altogether free from the fault which I imputed to Pliny's Epistles, of too much study and refinement. In

* See his letter to Atticus, which was written a year or two before his death, in which he tells him, in answer to some inquiries concerning his epistles, that he had no collection of them, and that Tyro had only about seventy of them. Ad ATT. 16. 5.

the variety of letters from different persons, contained in that collection, we find many that are written with ease, and a beautiful simplicity. Those of Dr. Arbuthnot, in particular, always deserve that praise. Dean Swift's also are unaffected; and as a proof of their being so, they exhibit his character fully, with all its defects; though it were to be wished, for the honour of his memory, that his epistolary correspondence had not been drained to the dregs, by so many successive publications, as have been given to the world. Several of Lord Bolingbroke's and of Bishop Atterbury's letters, are masterly. The censure of writing letters in too artificial a manner falls heaviest on Mr. Pope himself. There is visibly more study, and less of nature and the heart in his letters, than in those of some of his correspondents. He had formed himself on the manner of Voiture, and is too fond of writing like a wit. His letters to ladies are full of affectation. Even in writing to his friends, how forced an introduction is the following, of a letter to Mr. Addison: "I am more joy-
"ed at your return, than I should be at that of
"the sun, as much as I wish for him in this me-
"lancholy wet season; but it is his fate too, like
"your's, to be displeasing to owls and obscene
"animals, who cannot bear his lustre." How stiff a compliment it is, which he pays to Bishop Atterbury: "Though the noise and daily bustle for
"the public be now over, I dare say, you are still
"tendering its welfare; as the sun in winter, when

" seeming to retire from the world, is preparing " warmth and benedictions for a better season." This sentence might be tolerated in a harangue; but is very unsuitable to the style of one friend corresponding with another.

THE gaiety and vivacity of the French genius appear to much advantage in their letters, and have given birth to several agreeable publications. In the last age, Balzac and Voiture were the two most celebrated epistolary writers. Balzac's reputation indeed soon declined, on account of his swelling periods and pompous style. But Voiture continued long a favourite author. His composition is extremely sparkling; he shows a great deal of wit, and can trifle in the most entertaining manner. His only fault is, that he is too open and professed a wit, to be thoroughly agreeable as a letter writer. The Letters of Madame de Sevignè, are now esteemed the most accomplished model of a familiar correspondence. They turn indeed very much upon trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town; and they are overloaded with extravagant compliments, and expressions of fondness, to her favourite daughter; but withal, they show such perpetual sprightliness, they contain such easy and varied narration, and so many strokes of the most lively and beautiful painting, perfectly free from any affectation, that they are justly entitled to high praise. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague are not unworthy

of being named after those of Mad. de Sevignè. They have much of the French ease and vivacity; and retain more the character of agreeable epistolary style, than perhaps any letters which have appeared in the English language.

THERE remains to be treated of, another species of composition in prose, which comprehends a very numerous, though, in general, a very insignificant class of writings, known by the name of Romances and Novels. These may, at first view, seem too insignificant, to deserve that any particular notice should be taken of them. But I cannot be of this opinion. Mr. Fletcher of Salton, in one of his Tracts, quotes it as the saying of a wise man, that give him the making of all the ballads of a nation, he would allow any one that pleased to make their laws. The saying was founded on reflection and good sense, and is applicable to the subject now before us. For any kind of writing, how trifling soever in appearance, that obtains a general currency, and especially that early pre-occupies the imagination of the youth of both sexes, must demand particular attention. Its influence is likely to be considerable, both on the morals and taste of a nation.

IN fact, fictitious histories might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the er-

rors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well contrived stories, towards accomplishing these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction; and hence we find, that the wisest men in all ages have more or less employed fables and fictions, as the vehicles of knowledge. These have ever been the basis of both epic and dramatic poetry. It is not, therefore, the nature of this sort of writing, considered in itself, but the faulty manner of its execution, that can expose it to any contempt. Lord Bacon takes notice of our taste for fictitious history, as a proof of the greatness and dignity of the human mind. He observes, very ingeniously, that the objects of this world, and the common train of affairs which we behold going on in it, do not fill the mind, nor give it entire satisfaction. We seek for something that shall expand the mind in a greater degree: we seek for more heroic and illustrious deeds, for more diversified and surprising events, for a more splendid order of things, a more regular and just distribution of rewards and punishments than what we find here: because we meet not with these in true history, we have recourse to fictitious. We create worlds according to our fancy, in order to gratify our capacious desires: "Accomodando," says that great philosopher, "rerum simulachra "ad animi desideria, non submittendo animum re-

" bus, quod ratio, et historia*." Let us then, since the subject wants neither dignity nor use, make a few observations on the rise and progress of fictitious history, and the different forms it has assumed in different countries.

In all countries we find its origin very ancient. The genius of the eastern nations, in particular, was from the earliest times much turned towards invention, and the love of fiction. Their divinity, their philosophy, and their politics, were clothed in fables and parables. The Indians, the Persians, and Arabians, were all famous for their tales. The " Arabian Night's Entertainments" are the production of a romantic invention, but of a rich and amusing imagination; exhibiting a singular and curious display of manners and characters, and beautified with a very humane morality. Among the ancient Greeks, we hear of the Ionian and Milesian Tales; but they have now perished, and, from any account that we have of them, appear to have been of the loose and wanton kind. Some fictitious histories yet remain, that were composed during the decline of the Roman Empire, by Apuleius, Achilles, Tatius, and Heliodorus, bishop of Trica, in the 4th century; but none of them are considerable enough to merit particular criticisms.

* " Accommodating the appearances of things to the desires " of the mind, not bringing down the mind, as history and phi- " losophy do, to the course of events."

DURING the dark ages, this sort of writing assumed a new and very singular form, and for a long while made a great figure in the world. The martial spirit of those nations, among whom the feudal government prevailed; the establishment of single combat, as an allowed method of deciding causes both of justice and honour; the appointment of champions in the cause of women, who could not maintain their own rights by the sword; together with the institution of military tournaments, in which different kingdoms vied with one another, gave rise, in those times, to that marvellous system of chivalry, which is one of the most singular appearances in the history of mankind. Upon this were founded those romances of knight-errantry, which carried an ideal chivalry to a still more extravagant height than it had risen in fact. There was displayed in them a new and very wonderful sort of world, hardly bearing any resemblance to the world in which we dwell. Not only knights setting forth to redress all manner of wrongs, but in every page, magicians, dragons, and giants, invulnerable men, winged horses, enchanted armour, and enchanted castles; adventures absolutely incredible, yet suited to the gross ignorance of these ages, and to the legends, and superstitious notions concerning magic and necromancy which then prevailed. This merit they had, of being writings of the highly moral and heroic kind. Their knights were patterns, not of courage merely, but of religion, generosity, cour-

tesy, and fidelity; and the heroines were no less distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and the utmost dignity of manners.

THESE were the first compositions that received the name of Romances. The origin of this name is traced, by Mr. Huet, the learned bishop of Avranche, to the Provençal Troubadoures, a sort of story-tellers and bards in the county of Provence, where there subsisted some remains of literature and poetry. The language which prevailed in that country was a mixture of Latin and Gallic, called the Roman or Romance language; and, as the stories of these Troubadoures were written in that language, hence it is said the name of Romance, which we now apply to all fictitious composition.

THE earliest of these romances, is that which goes under the name of Turpin, the archbishop of Rheims, written in the 11th century. The subject is, the atchievements of Charlemagne and his Peers, or Paladins, in driving the Saracens out of France and part of Spain; the same subject which Ariosto has taken for his celebrated poem of Orlando Furioso, which is truly a Chivalry Romance, as extravagant as any of the rest, but partly heroic, and partly comic, embellished with the highest graces of poetry. The Romance of Turpin was followed by Amadis de Gaul, and many more of the same stamp. The crusades both furnished new matter, and increased the spirit for such writ-

ings; the Christians against the Saracens made the common ground-work of them; and from the 11th to the 16th century, they continued to bewitch all Europe. In Spain, where the taste for this sort of writing had been most greedily caught, the ingenious Cervantes, in the beginning of the last century, contributed greatly to explode it; and the abolition of tournaments, the prohibition of single combat, the disbelief of magic and enchantments, and the change in general of manners throughout Europe, began to give a new turn to fictitious composition.

THEN appeared the Astræa of D'urfé, the grand Cyrus, the Clelia and Cleopatra of Mad. Scuderi, the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney, and other grave and stately compositions in the same style. These may be considered as forming the second stage of romance writing. The heroism and the gallantry, the moral and virtuous turn of the chivalry romance, were still preserved; but the dragons, the necromancers, and the enchanted castles, were banished, and some small resemblance to human nature was introduced. Still, however, there was too much of the marvellous in them to please an age which now aspired to refinement. The characters were discerned to be strained; the style to be swoln; the adventures incredible; the books themselves were voluminous and tedious.

HENCE, this sort of composition soon assumed

a third form, and from magnificent heroic romance, dwindled down to the familiar novel. These novels, both in France and England, during the age of Lewis XIV. and King Charles II. were in general of a trifling nature, without the appearance of moral tendency, or useful instruction. Since that time, however, somewhat better has been attempted, and a degree of reformation introduced into the spirit of novel-writing. Imitations of life and character have been made their principal object. Relations have been professed to be given of the behaviour of persons in particular interesting situations, such as may actually occur in life; by means of which, what is laudable or defective in character and conduct, may be pointed out, and placed in an useful light. Upon this plan, the French have produced some compositions of considerable merit. Gil Blas, by Le Sage, is a book full of good sense, and instructive knowledge of the world. The works of Maurivaux, especially his Marianne, discover great refinement of thought, great penetration into human nature, and paint with a very delicate pencil, some of the nicest shades and features in the distinction of characters. The Nouvelle Heloise of Rousseau is a production of a very singular kind; in many of the events which are related, improbable and unnatural; in some of the details tedious, and for some of the scenes which are described justly blameable; but withal, for the power of eloquence, for tenderness of sentiment, for ar-

dour of passion, entitled to rank among the highest productions of fictitious history.

In this kind of writing we are, it must be confessed, in Great Britain, inferior to the French. We neither relate so agreeably, nor draw characters with so much delicacy; yet we are not without some performances which discover the strength of the British genius. No fiction, in any language, was ever better supported than the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. While it is carried on with that appearance of truth and simplicity, which takes a strong hold of the imagination of all readers, it suggests at the same time, very useful instruction; by showing how much the native powers of man may be exerted for surmounting the difficulties of any external situation. Mr. Fielding's Novels are highly distinguished for their humour; a humour which, if not of the most refined and delicate kind, is original and peculiar to himself. The characters which he draws are lively and natural, and marked with the strokes of a bold pencil. The general scope of his stories is favourable to humanity and goodness of heart; and in Tom Jones, his greatest work, the artful conduct of the fable, and the subserviency of all the incidents to the winding up of the whole, deserve much praise. The most moral of all our novel writers is Richardson, the author of Clarissa, a writer of excellent intentions, and of very considerable capacity and genius; did he not posses

the unfortunate talent of spinning out pieces of amusement into an immeasurable length. The trivial performances which daily appear in public under the title of lives, adventures, and histories, by anonymous authors, if they be often innocent, yet are most commonly insipid; and though in the general it ought to be admitted that characteristical novels, formed upon nature and upon life, without extravagance and without licentiousness, might furnish an agreeable and useful entertainment to the mind; yet considering the manner in which these writings have been, for the most part, conducted, it must also be confessed, that they oftener tend to dissipation and idleness, than to any good purpose. Let us now, therefore, make our retreat from these regions of fiction.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

NATURE OF POETRY——ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS—VERSIFICATION.

I HAVE now finished my observations on the different kinds of writing in prose. What remains is, to treat of poetical composition. Before entering on the consideration of any of its particular kinds, I design this Lecture as an introduction to the subject of poetry in general; wherein I shall treat of its nature, give an account of its origin, and make some observations on versification, or poetical numbers.

OUR first enquiry must be, what is poetry? and wherein does it differ from prose? The answer to this question is not so easy as might at first be imagined; and critics have differed and disputed much concerning the proper definition of poetry. Some have made its essence to consist in fiction, and support their opinion by the authority of Aristotle and Plato. But this is certainly too limited a definition; for though fiction may have a great

share in many poetical compositions, yet many subjects of poetry may not be feigned; as where the poet describes objects which actually exist, or pours forth the real sentiments of his own heart. Others have made the characteristic of poetry to lie in imitation. But this is altogether loose; for several other arts imitate as well as poetry; and an imitation of human manners and characters, may be carried on in the humblest prose, no less than in the more lofty poetic strain.

The most just and comprehensive definition which, I think, can be given of poetry, is, "That "it is the language of passion, or of enlivened "imagination, formed, most commonly, into re- "gular numbers." The historian, the orator, the philosopher, address themselves, for the most part, primarily to the understanding: their direct aim is to inform, to persuade, or to instruct. But the primary aim of a poet is to please, and to move; and, therefore, it is to the imagination, and the passions, that he speaks. He may, and he ought to have it in his view, to instruct and to reform; but it is indirectly, and by pleasing and moving, that he accomplishes this end. His mind is supposed to be animated by some interesting object which fires his imagination, or engages his passions; and which, of course, communicates to his style a peculiar elevation suited to his ideas; very different from that mode of expression, which is natural to the mind in its calm, ordinary state. I

have added to my definition, that this language of passion, or imagination, is formed, *most commonly* into regular numbers; because, though versification be, in general, the exterior distinction of poetry, yet there are some forms of verse so loose and familiar, as to be hardly distinguishable from prose; such as the verse of Terence's Comedies; and there is also a species of prose, so measured in its cadence, and so much raised in its tone, as to approach very near to poetical numbers; such as the Telemachus of Fenelon; and the English translation of Ossian. The truth is, verse and prose on some occasions, run into one another, like light and shade. It is hardly possible to determine the exact limit where eloquence ends, and poetry begins; nor is there any occasion for being very precise about the boundaries, as long as the nature of each is understood. These are the minutiæ of criticism, concerning which frivolous writers are always disposed to squabble; but which deserve not any particular discussion. The truth and justness of the definition which I have given of poetry, will appear more fully from the account which I am now to give of its origin, and which will tend to throw light on much of what I am afterwards to deliver, concerning its various kinds.

THE Greeks, ever fond of attributing to their own nation the invention of all sciences and arts, have ascribed the origin of poetry to Orpheus,

Linus, and Musæus. There were, perhaps, such persons as these, who were the first distinguished bards in the Grecian countries. But long before such names were heard of, and among nations where they were never known, poetry existed. It is a great error to imagine, that poetry and music are arts which belong only to polished nations. They have their foundation in the nature of man, and belong to all nations, and to all ages; though, like other arts founded in nature, they have been more cultivated, and, from a concurrence of favourable circumstances, carried to greater perfection in some countries than in others. In order to explore the rise of poetry, we must have recourse to the deserts and the wilds; we must go back to the age of hunters and of shepherds; to the highest antiquity; and to the simplest form of manners among mankind.

It has been often said, and the concurring voice of all antiquity affirms, that poetry is older than prose. But in what sense this seemingly strange paradox holds true, has not always been well understood. There never, certainly, was any period of society in which men conversed together in poetical numbers. It was in very humble and scanty prose, as we may easily believe, that the first tribes carried on intercourse among themselves, relating to the wants and necessities of life. But from the very beginning of society, there were occasions on which they met together for

feasts, sacrifices, and public assemblies; and on all such occasions, it is well known, that music, song, and dance, made their principal entertainment. It is chiefly in America, that we have had the opportunity of being made acquainted with men in their savage state. We learn from the particular and concurring accounts of travellers, that, among all the nations of that vast continent, especially among the northern tribes, with whom we have had most intercourse, music and song are, at all their meetings, carried on with an incredible degree of enthusiasm; that the chiefs of the tribe are those who signalize themselves most on such occasions; that it is in songs they celebrate their religious rites; that, by these, they lament their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors; express their joy on their victories; celebrate the great actions of their nation, and their heroes; excite each other to perform great exploits in war, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.

HERE then we see the first beginnings of poetic composition, in those rude effusions, which the enthusiasm of fancy or passion suggested to untaught men, when roused by interesting events, and by their meeting together in public assemblies. Two particulars would early distinguish this language of song, from that in which they conversed on the common occurrences of life; namely, an unusual arrangement of words, and

the employment of bold figures of speech. It would invert words, or change them from that order in which they are commonly placed, to that which most suited the train in which they rose in the speaker's imagination: or which was most accommodated to the cadence of the passion by which he was moved. Under the influence too of any strong emotion, objects do not appear to us such as they really are, but such as passion makes us see them. We magnify and exaggerate; we seek to interest all others in what causes our emotion; we compare the least things to the greatest; we call upon the absent as well as the present, and even address ourselves to things inanimate. Hence, in congruity with those various movements of the mind, arise those turns of expression, which we now distinguish, by the learned names of hyperbole, prosopopœia, simile, &c. but which are no other than the native original language of poetry among the most barbarous nations.

MAN is both a poet, and a musician by nature. The same impulse which prompted the enthusiastic poetic style, prompted a certain melody, or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of joy or grief, of admiration, love, or anger. . There is a power in sound, which, partly from nature, partly from habit and association, makes such pathetic impressions on the fancy, as delight even the most wild barbarians. Music and poetry, therefore, had the same rise; they were

prompted by the same occasions; they were united in song; and, as long as they continued united, they tended, without doubt, mutually to heighten and exalt each other's power. The first poets sung their own verses; and hence the beginning of what we call versification, or words arranged in a more artful order than prose, so as to be suited to some tune or melody. The liberty of transposition, or inversion, which the poetic style, as I observed, would naturally assume, made it easier to form the words into some sort of numbers that fell in with the music of the song. Very harsh and uncouth, we may easily believe, these numbers would be at first. But the pleasure was felt; it was studied; and versification, by degrees, passed into an art.

It appears from what has been said, that the first compositions which were either recorded by writing or transmitted by tradition, could be no other than poetical compositions. No other but these, could draw the attention of men in their rude uncivilized state. Indeed they knew no other. Cool reasoning and plain discourse had no power to attract savage tribes, addicted only to hunting and war. There was nothing that could either rouse the speaker to pour himself forth, or draw the crowd to listen, but the high powers of passion, of music, and of song. This vehicle, therefore, and no other, could be employed by chiefs and legislators, when they meant to in-

struct or to animate their tribes. There is, likewise, a farther reason why such compositions only could be transmitted to posterity; because, before writing was invented, songs only could last, and be remembered. The ear gave assistance to the memory, by the help of numbers; fathers repeated and sung them to their children; and by this oral tradition of national ballads, were conveyed all the historical knowledge, and all the instruction of the first ages.

THE earliest accounts which history gives us concerning all nations, bear testimony to these facts. In the first ages of Greece, priests, philosophers, and statesmen, all delivered their instructions in poetry. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, their most ancient bards, are represented as the first tamers of mankind, the first founders of law and civilization. Minos and Thales sung to the lyre the laws which they composed*; and till the age immediately preceding that of Herodotus, history had appeared in no other form than that of poetical tales.

IN the same manner, among all other nations, poets and songs are the first objects that make their appearance. Among the Scythian or Gothic nations, many of their kings and leaders were

* Strabo l. 10.

scalders, or poets; and it is from their runic songs, that the most early writers of their history, such as Saxo-Grammaticus, acknowledge, that they had derived their chief information. Among the Celtic tribes, in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, we know, in what admiration their bards were held, and how great influence they possessed over the people. They were both poets and musicians, as all the first poets in every country were. They were always near the person of the chief or sovereign; they recorded all his great exploits; they were employed as the ambassadors between contending tribes, and their persons were held sacred.

FROM this deduction it follows, that as we have reason to look for poems and songs among the antiquities of all countries, so we may expect, that in the strain of these there will be a remarkable resemblance, during the primitive periods of every country. The occasions of their being composed, are every where nearly the same. The praises of gods and heroes, the celebration of famed ancestors, the recital of martial deeds, songs of victory, and songs of lamentation over the misfortunes and death of their countrymen, occur among all nations; and the same enthusiasm and fire, the same wild and irregular, but animated composition, concise and glowing style, bold and extravagant figures of speech, are the general distinguishing characters of all the most ancient

original poetry. That strong hyperbolical manner which we have been long accustomed to call the Oriental manner of poetry, (because some of the earliest poetical productions came to us from the east,) is in truth no more Oriental than Occidental; it is characteristical of an age rather than of a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at that period which first gives rise to music and to song. Mankind never resemble each other, so much as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give birth to the principal distinctions of character among nations, and divert into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring.

DIVERSITY of climate, and of manner of living, will, however, occasion some diversity in the strain of the first poetry of nations; chiefly, according as those nations are of a more ferocious, or of a more gentle spirit; and according as they advance faster or slower in the arts of civilization. Thus we find all the remains of the ancient gothic poetry remarkably fierce, and breathing nothing but slaughter and blood; while the Peruvian and the Chinese songs turned, from the earliest times, upon milder subjects. The Celtic poetry, in the days of Ossian, though chiefly of the martial kind, yet had attained a considerable mixture of tenderness and refinement; in consequence of the long cultivation of poetry among the Celtæ, by means

of a series and succession of bards which had been established for ages. So Lucan informs us:

> Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos
> Laudibus in longum vatés diffunditis ævum
> Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi *. [L. 41.]

AMONG the Grecian nations, their early poetry appears to have soon received a philosophical cast, from what we are informed concerning the subjects of Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus, who treated of creation and of chaos, of the generation of the world, and of the rise of things; and we know that the Greeks advanced sooner to philosophy, and proceeded with a quicker pace in all the arts of refinement than most other nations.

THE Arabians and the Persians have always been the greatest poets of the east, and among them, as among other nations, poetry was the earliest vehicle of all their learning and instruction †. The ancient Arabs, we are informed ‡, valued themselves much on their metrical compositions,

---

* You too, ye bards, whom sacred raptures fire,
To chaunt your heroes to your country's lyre,
Who consecrate in your immortal strain,
Brave patriot souls in righteous battle slain;
Securely now the useful task renew,
And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue. ROWE.

† Vid. Voyages de Chardin, chap. de la Poësie des Persans.

‡ Vid. Preliminary Discourse to Sale's Translation of the Koran.

which were of two sorts; the one they compared to loose pearls, and the other to pearls strung. In the former the sentences or verses were without connection, and their beauty arose from the elegance of the expression, and the acuteness of the sentiment. The moral doctrines of the Persians were generally comprehended in such independent proverbial apophthegms, formed into verse. In this respect they bear a considerable resemblance to the Proverbs of Solomon; a great part of which book consists of unconnected poetry, like the loose pearls of the Arabians. The same form of composition appears also in the book of Job. The Greeks seem to have been the first who introduced a more regular structure, and closer connection of parts, into their poetical writings.

DURING the infancy of poetry, all the different kinds of it lay confused, and were mingled in the same composition, according as inclination, enthusiasm, or casual incidents, directed the poet's strain. In the progress of society and arts, they began to assume those different regular forms, and to be distinguished by those different names under which we now know them. But in the first rude state of poetical effusions, we can easily discern the seeds and beginnings of all the kinds of regular poetry. Odes and hymns of every sort, would naturally be among the first compositions; according as the bards were moved by religious feelings, by exultation, resentment, love, or any other warm

sentiment, to pour themselves forth in song. Plaintive or elegiac poetry, would as naturally arise from lamentations over their deceased friends. The recital of the achievements of their heroes, and their ancestors, gave birth to what we now call epic poetry; and as not content with simply reciting these, they would infallibly be led, at some of their public meetings, to represent them, by introducing different bards speaking in the character of their heroes, and answering each other, we find in this the first outlines of Tragedy, or Dramatic Writing.

NONE of these kinds of poetry, however, were in the first ages of society properly distinguished or separated, as they are now from each other. Indeed, not only were the different kinds of poetry then mixed together, but all that we now call letters, or composition of any kind, was then blended in one mass. At first, history, eloquence, and poetry, were all the same. Whoever wanted to move or to persuade, to inform or to entertain his countrymen and neighbours, whatever was the subject, accompanied his sentiment and tales with the melody of song. This was the case in that period of society, when the character and occupations of the husbandman and the builder, the warrior and the statesman, were united in one person. When the progress of society brought on a separation of the different arts and professions of

civil life, it led also by degrees to a separation of the different literary provinces from each other.

THE art of writing was in process of time invented; records of past transactions began to be kept; men, occupied with the subjects of policy and useful arts, wished now to be instructed and informed, as well as moved. They reasoned and reflected upon the affairs of life; and were interested by what was real, not fabulous, in past transactions. The historian, therefore, now laid aside the buskins of poetry; he wrote in prose, and attempted to give a faithful and judicious relation of former events. The philosopher addressed himself chiefly to the understanding. The orator studied to persuade by reasoning, and retained more or less of the ancient passionate and glowing style, according as it was conducive to his purpose. Poetry became now a separate art, calculated chiefly to please, and confined generally to such subjects as related to the imagination and passions. Even its earliest companion, music, was in a great measure divided from it.

THESE separations brought all the literary arts into a more regular form, and contributed to the exact and accurate cultivation of each. Poetry, however, in its ancient original condition, was perhaps more vigorous than it is in its modern state. It included then, the whole burst of the human mind; the whole exertion of its imaginative facul-

ties. It spoke then the language of passion, and no other; for to passion it owed its birth. Prompted and inspired by objects which to him seemed great, by events which interested his country or his friends, the early bard arose and sung. He sung indeed in wild and disorderly strains; but they were the native effusions of his heart; they were the ardent conceptions of admiration or resentment, of sorrow or friendship, which he poured forth. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the rude and artless strain of the first poetry of all nations, we should often find somewhat that captivates and transports the mind. In after ages, when poetry became a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain, authors began to affect what they did not feel. Composing coolly in their closets, they endeavoured to imitate passion, rather than to express it; they tried to force their imagination into raptures, or to supply the defect of native warmth, by those artificial ornaments which might give composition a splendid appearance.

THE separation of music from poetry, produced consequences not favourable in some respects to poetry, and in many respects hurtful to music.* As long as they remained united, music enlivened and animated poetry, and poetry gave force and expression to musical sound. The music of

* See Dr. Brown's Dissertation on the *Rise, Union, and Separation of Poetry and Music.*

that early period was, beyond doubt, extremely simple; and must have consisted chiefly of such pathetic notes, as the voice could adapt to the words of the song. Musical instruments, such as flutes and pipes, and a lyre with a very few strings, appear to have been early invented among some nations; but no more was intended by these instruments, than simply to accompany the voice, and to heighten the melody of song. The poet's strain was always heard; and, from many circumstances, it appears, that among the ancient Greeks, as well as among other nations, the bard sung his verses, and played upon his harp or lyre at the same time. In this state, the art of music was, when it produced all those great effects of which we read so much in ancient history. And certain it is, that from simple music only, and from music accompanied with verse or song, we are to look for strong expression, and powerful influence over the human mind. When instrumental music came to be studied as a separate art, divested of the poet's song, and formed into the artificial and intricate combinations of harmony, it lost all its ancient power of inflaming the hearers with strong emotions; and sunk into an art of mere amusement, among polished and luxurious nations.

STILL, however, poetry preserves, in all countries, some remains of its first and original connection with music. By being uttered in song, it was formed into numbers, or into an artificial ar-

rangement of words and syllables, very different in different countries; but such as to the inhabitants of each, seemed most melodious and agreeable in sound. Whence arises that great characteristic of poetry which we now call verse; a subject which comes next to be treated of.

IT is a subject of a curious nature; but as I am sensible, that, were I to pursue it as far as my inclination leads, it would give rise to discussions, which the greater part of readers would consider as minute, I shall confine myself to a few observations upon English versification.

NATIONS, whose language and pronunciation were of a musical kind, rested their versification chiefly upon the quantities, that is, the length or shortness of their syllables. Others, who did not make the quantities of their syllables be so distinctly perceived in pronouncing them, rested the melody of their verse upon the number of syllables it contained, upon the proper disposition of accents and pauses in it, and frequently upon that return of corresponding sounds, which we call rhyme. The former was the case with the Greeks and Romans; the latter is the case with us, and with most modern nations. Among the Greeks and Romans, every syllable, or the far greatest number at least, was known to have a fixed and determined quantity; and their manner of pronouncing rendered this so sensible to the ear, that

a long syllable was counted precisely equal in time to two short ones. Upon this principle, the number of syllables contained in their hexameter verse was allowed to vary. It may extend to 17; it can contain, when regular, no fewer than 13: but the musical time was, notwithstanding, precisely the same in every hexameter verse, and was always equal to that of 12 long syllables. In order to ascertain the regular time of every verse, and the proper mixture and succession of long and short syllables which ought to compose it, were invented, what the grammarians call metrical feet, dactyles, spondees, iambus, &c. By these measures was tried the accuracy of composition in every line, and whether it was so constructed as to complete its proper melody. It was requisite, for instance, that the hexameter verse should have the quantity of its syllables so disposed, that it could be scanned or measured by six metrical feet, which might be either dactyles or spondees (as the musical time of both these is the same,) with this restriction only, that the fifth foot was regularly to be a dactyle, and the last a spondee.*

* Some writers imagine, that the feet in Latin verse were intended to correspond to bars in music, and to form musical intervals or distinctions, sensible to the ear in the pronunciation of the line. Had this been the case, every kind of verse must have had a peculiar order of feet appropriated to it. But the common prosodies show, that there are several forms of Latin verse which are capable of being measured indifferently, by a series of feet of very different kinds. For instance, what is called the

THE introduction of these feet into English verse would be altogether out of place; for the genius of our language corresponds not in this respect to the Greek or Latin. I say not, that we have no regard to quantity, or to long and short, in pronouncing. Many words we have, especially our words consisting of several syllables, where the quantity, or the long and short syllables, are invariably fixed; but great numbers we have also, where the quantity is left altogether loose. This is the case with a great part of our words consisting of two syllables, and with almost all our monosyllables. In general, the difference made be-

---

Asclepedæan verse (in which the first Ode of Horace is written) may be scanned either by a Spondeus, two Choriambus's, and a Pyrrichius; or by Spondeus, a Dactylus succeeded by a Cæsura, and two Dactylus's. The common Pentameter, and some other forms of verse, admit the like varieties; and yet the melody of the verse remains always the same, though it be scanned by different feet. This proves, that the metrical feet were not sensible in the pronunciation of the line, but were intended only to regulate its construction; or applied as measures, to try whether the succession of long and short syllables, was such as suited the melody of the verse: and as feet of different kinds could sometimes be applied for this purpose, hence it happened, that some forms of verse were capable of being scanned in different ways, for measuring the hexameter line, no other feet were found so proper as Dactylus and Spondees, and therefore by these it is uniformly scanned. But no ear is sensible of the termination of each foot, in reading an hexameter line. From a misapprehension of this matter, I apprehend that confusion has sometimes arisen among writers, in treating of the prosody both of Latin and of English verse.

tween long and short syllables, in our manner of pronouncing them is so very inconsiderable, and so much liberty is left us for making them either long or short at pleasure, that mere quantity is of very little effect in English versification. The only perceptible difference among our syllables, arises from some of them being uttered with that stronger percussion of voice, which we call accent. This accent does not always make the syllable longer, but gives it more force of sound only; and it is upon a certain order and succession of accented and unaccented syllables, infinitely more than upon their being long or short, that the melody of our verse depends. If we take any of Mr. Pope's lines, and in reciting them alter the quantity of the syllables, as far as our quantities are sensible, the music of the verse will not be much injured: whereas, if we do not accent the syllables according as the verse dictates, its melody will be totally destroyed.*

---

* See this well illustrated in Lord Monboddo's Treatise of *the Origin and Progress of Language,* Vol. II. under the head of the Prosody of Language. He shews that this is not the only constitution of our own verse, but that by our manner of reading Latin verse, we make its music nearly the same. For we certainly do not pronounce it according to the ancient quantities, so as to make the musical time of one long syllable equal to two short ones; but according to a succession of accented and unaccented syllables, only mixed in a ratio different from that of our own verse. No Roman could possibly understand our pronunciation.

OUR English heroic verse is of what may be called an iambic structure; that is, composed of a succession nearly alternate of syllables, not short and long, but unaccented and accented. With regard to the place of these accents, however, some liberty is admitted, for the sake of variety. Very often, though not always, the line begins with an unaccented syllable; and sometimes, in the course of it, two unaccented syllables follow each other. But in general, there are either five, or four, accented syllables in each line. The number of syllables is ten, unless where an Alexandrian verse is occasionally admitted. In verses not Alexandrian, instances occur where the line appears to have more than the limited number. But in such instances, I apprehend it will be found, that some of the liquid syllables are so slurred in pronouncing, as to bring the verse, with respect to its effect upon the ear, within the usual bounds.

ANOTHER essential circumstance in the constitution of our verse, is the cæsural pause, which falls towards the middle of each line. Some pause of this kind, dictated by the melody, is found in the verse of most nations. It is found, as might be shewn, in the Latin hexameter. In the French heroic verse, it is very sensible. That is a verse of twelve syllables, and in every line, just after the sixth syllable, there falls regularly and indispensably, a cæsural pause, dividing the line into

two equal hemistichs. For example, in the first lines of Boileau's Epistle to the King.

Jeune et vaillant heros | dont la haut sagesse
N'est point le fruit tardif | d'une lente vieillesse,
Qui seul san Ministre | à l'example des Dieux
Soutiens tout par toi-meme | et vois tous par ses veux.

In this train all their verses proceed; the one half of the line always answering to the other, and the same chime returning incessantly on the ear without intermission or change; which is certainly a defect in their verse, and unfits it so very much for the freedom and dignity of heroic poetry. On the other hand it is a distinguishing advantage of our English verse, that it allows the pause to be varied through four different syllables in the line. The pause may fall after the 4th, the 5th, the 6th, or the 7th syllable; and according as the pause is placed after one or other of these syllables, the melody of the verse is much changed, its air and cadence are diversified. By this means, uncommon richness and variety are added to English versification.

WHEN the pause falls earliest, that is after the 4th syllable, the briskest melody is thereby formed, and the most spirited air given to the line. In the following lines of the Rape of the Lock, Mr. Pope has, with exquisite propriety, suited the construction of the verse to the subject:

On her white breast | a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss | and Infidels adore;
Her lively looks | a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes | and as unfix'd as those.
Favours to none | to all she smiles extends,
Oft she rejects | but never once offends.

WHEN the pause falls after the 5th syllable, which divides the line into two equal portions, the melody is sensibly altered. The verse loses that brisk and sprightly air, which it had with the former pause, and becomes more smooth, gentle, and flowing.

Eternal sunshine | of the spotless mind,
Each prayer accepted | and each wish resign'd.

WHEN the pause proceeds to follow the 6th syllable, the tenor of the music becomes solemn and grave. The verse marches now with a more slow and measured pace, than in either of the two former cases.

The wrath of Peleus' son | the direful spring
Of all the Grecian woes | O goddess, sing!

BUT the grave solemn cadence becomes still more sensible, when the pause falls after the 7th syllable, which is the nearest place to the end of the line that it can occupy. This kind of verse occurs the seldomest, but has a happy effect in diversifying the melody. It produces that slow Alexandrian air, which is finely suited to a close;

and for this reason, such lines almost never occur together, but are used in finishing the couplet.

And in the smooth description | murmur still.
Long lov'd ador'd ideas | all adieu.

I HAVE taken my examples from verses in rhyme; because in these, our versification is subjected to the strictest law. As blank verse is of a freer kind, and naturally is read with less cadence or tone, the pauses in it, and the effect of them, are not always so sensible to the ear. It is constructed, however, entirely upon the same principles, with respect to the place of the pause. There are some, who, in order to exalt the variety and the power of our heroic verse, have maintained that it admits of musical pauses, not only after those four syllables where I assigned their place, but after any one syllable in the verse indifferently, where the sense directs it to be placed. This, in my opinion, is the same thing as to maintain that there is no pause at all belonging to the natural melody of the verse; since, according to this notion, the pause is formed entirely to the meaning, not by the music. But this I apprehend to be contrary both to the nature of versification, and to the experience of every good ear*. Those cer-

* In the Italian heroic verse employed by Tasso in his Gierusalemme, and Ariosto in his Orlando, the pauses are of the same varied nature with those which I have shewn to belong to English

tainly are the happiest lines, wherein the pause, prompted by the melody, coincides in some degree with that of the sense, or at least does not tend to spoil or interrupt the meaning. Whereever any opposition between the music and the sense chances to take place, I observed before, in treating of pronunciation or delivery, that the proper method of reading these lines, is to read them according as the sense dictates, neglecting or slurring the cæsural pause, which renders the line less graceful indeed, but, however, does not entirely destroy its sound.

OUR blank verse possesses great advantages, and is indeed a noble, bold, and disencumbered species of versification. The principal defect in rhyme, is the full close which it forces upon the ear, at the end of every couplet. Blank verse is freed from this, and allows the lines to run into each other with as great liberty as the Latin hexameter permits, perhaps with greater. Hence it

---

versification, and fall after the same four syllables in the line. Marmontel, in his Poëtique Françoise, Vol. I. p. 269. takes notice that this construction of verse is common to the Italians and the English; and defends the uniformity of the French cæsural pause upon this ground, that the alteration of masculine and feminine rhymes, furnishes sufficient variety to the French poetry; whereas the change of movement, occasioned by the four different pauses in English and Italian verse, produces, according to him, too great diversity. On the head of pauses in English versification, see the Elements of Criticism, chap. 18. sect. 4.

is particularly suited to subjects of dignity and force, which demand more free and manly numbers than rhyme. The constraint and strict regularity of rhyme, are unfavourable to the sublime, or to the highly pathetic strain. An epic poem, or a tragedy, would be fettered and degraded by it. It is best adapted to compositions of a temperate strain, where no particular vehemence is required in the sentiments, nor great sublimity in the style; such as pastorals, elegies, epistles, satires, &c. To these it communicates that degree of elevation which is proper for them; and without any other assistance sufficiently distinguishes the style from prose. He who should write such poems in blank verse, would render his work harsh and unpleasing. In order to support a poetical style, he would be obliged to affect a pomp of language, unsuitable to the subject.

THOUGH I join in opinion with those, who think that rhyme finds its proper place in the middle, but not in the higher regions of poetry, I can by no means join in the invectives which some have poured out against it, as if it were a mere barbarous jingling of sounds, fit only for children, and owing to nothing but the corruption of taste in the monkish ages. Rhyme might indeed be barbarous in Latin or Greek verse, because these languages by the sonorousness of their words, by their liberty of transposition and inversion, by their fixed quantities and musical pronunciation,

could carry on the melody of verse without its aid. But is does not follow, that therefore it must be barbarous in the English language, which is destitute of these advantages. Every language has powers and graces, and music peculiar to itself; and what is becoming in one, would be ridiculous in another. Rhyme was barbarous in Latin; and an attempt to construct English verses after the form of hexameters, and pentameters, and sapphics, is as barbarous among us. It is not true, that rhyme is merely a monkish invention. On the contrary, it has obtained under different forms, in the versification of most known nations. It is found in the ancient poetry of the northern nations of Europe; it is said to be found among the Arabs, the Persians, the Indians, and the Americans. This shews that there is something in the return of similar sounds, which is grateful to the ears of most part of mankind. And if any one, after reading Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, or Eloisa to Abelard, shall not admit our rhyme, with all its varieties of pauses, to carry both elegance and sweetness of sound, his ear must be pronounced to be of a very peculiar kind.

THE present form of our English heroic rhyme in couplets, is a modern species of versification. The measure generally used in the days of Queen Elizabeth, King James, and King Charles I. was the stanza of eight lines, such as Spencer employs, borrowed from the Italian; a measure very con-

strained and artificial. Waller was the first who brought couplets into vogue; and Dryden afterwards established the usage. Waller first smoothed our verse; Dryden perfected it. Mr. Pope's versification has a peculiar character. It is flowing and smooth in the highest degree; far more laboured and correct than that of any one who went before him. He introduced one considerable change into heroic verse, by totally throwing aside the triplets, or three lines rhyming together, in which Mr. Dryden abounded. Dryden's versification, however, has very great merit; and, like all his productions, has much spirit, mixed with carelessness. If not so smooth and correct as Pope's, it is however more varied and easy. He subjects himself less to the rule of closing the sense with the couplet; and frequently takes the liberty of making his couplets run into one another, with somewhat of the freedom of blank verse.

LECTURE XXXIX.

PASTORAL POETRY—LYRIC POETRY.

In the last Lecture, I gave an account of the rise and progress of poetry, and made some observations on the nature of English versification. I now proceed to treat of the chief kinds of poetical composition; and of the critical rules that relate to them. I shall follow that order which is most simple and natural, beginning with the lesser forms of poetry, and ascending from them to the epic and dramatic, as the most dignified. This Lecture shall be employed on pastoral and lyric poetry.

Though I begin with the consideration of pastoral poetry, it is not because I consider it as one of the earliest forms of poetical composition. On the contrary, I am of opinion that it was not cultivated as a distinct species, or subject of writing, until society had advanced in refinement. Most authors have indeed indulged the fancy, that because the life which mankind at first led was rural,

therefore their first poetry was pastoral, or employed in the celebration of rural scenes and objects. I make no doubt, that it would borrow many of its images and allusions from those natural objects, with which men were best acquainted; but I am persuaded that the calm and tranquil scenes of rural felicity were not, by any means, the first objects which inspired that strain of composition which we now call poetry. It was inspired, in the first periods of every nation, by events and objects which roused men's passions; or, at least, awakened their wonder and admiration. The actions of their gods and heroes, their own exploits in war, the successes or misfortunes of their countrymen and friends, furnished the first themes to the bards of every country. What was of a pastoral kind in their compositions, was incidental only. They did not think of chusing for their theme, the tranquillity and the pleasures of the country, as long as these were daily and familiar objects to them. It was not till men had begun to be assembled in great cities, after the distinctions of rank and station were formed, and the bustle of courts and large societies was known, that pastoral poetry assumed its present form. Men then began to look back upon the more simple and innocent life which their forefathers led, or which, at least, they fancied them to have led: they looked back upon it with pleasure; and in those rural scenes, and pastoral occupations, imagining a degree of felicity to take place, su-

perior to what they now enjoyed, conceived the idea of celebrating it in poetry. It was in the court of King Ptolemy, that Theocritus wrote the first pastorals with which we are acquainted; and in the court of Augustus, he was imitated by Virgil.

BUT whatever may have been the origin of pastoral poetry, it is, undoubtedly, a natural, and very agreeable form of poetical composition. It recals to our imagination, those gay scenes, and pleasing views of nature, which commonly are the delight of our childhood and youth; and to which, in more advanced years, the greatest part of men recur with pleasure. It exhibits to us a life, with which we are accustomed to associate the ideas of peace, of leisure, and of innocence; and therefore, we readily set open our heart to such representations as promise to banish from our thoughts the cares of the world, and to transport us into calm elysian regions. At the same time, no subject seems to be more favourable to poetry. Amidst rural objects, nature presents, on all hands, the finest field for description; and nothing appears to flow more, of its own accord, into poetical numbers, than rivers and mountains, meadows and hills, flocks and trees, and shepherds void of care. Hence, this species of poetry has, at all times, allured many readers, and excited many writers. But, notwithstanding the advantages it possesses, it will appear, from what I have farther

to observe upon it, that there is hardly any species of poetry which is more difficult to be carried to perfection, or in which fewer writers have excelled.

PASTORAL life may be considered, in three different views; either such as it now actually is; when the state of shepherds is reduced to be a mean, servile, and laborious state; when their employments are become disagreeable, and their ideas gross and low; or such as we may suppose it once to have been, in the more early and simple ages, when it was a life of ease and abundance; when the wealth of men consisted chiefly in flocks and herds, and the shepherd, though unrefined in his manners, was respectable in his state: or, lastly, such as it never was, and never can in reality be, when, to the ease, innocence, and simplicity of the early ages, we attempt to add the polished taste, and cultivated manners, of modern times. Of these three states, the first is too gross and mean, the last too refined and unnatural, to be made the ground-work of pastoral poetry. Either of these extremes is a rock upon which the poet will split, if he approach too near it. We shall be disgusted if he give us too much of the servile employments and low ideas of actual peasants, as Theocritus is censured for having sometimes done; and if, like some of the French and Italian writers of pastorals, he makes his shepherds discourse as if they were courtiers and scholars, he then retains the name only, but wants the spirit of pastoral poetry.

He must, therefore, keep in the middle station between these. He must form to himself the idea of a rural state, such as in certain periods of society may have actually taken place, where there was ease, equality and innocence; where shepherds were gay and agreeable, without being learned or refined; and plain and artless, without being gross and wretched. The great charm of pastoral poetry arises from the view which it exhibits of the tranquillity and happiness of a rural life. This pleasing illusion, therefore, the poet must carefully maintain. He must display to us, all that is agreeable in that state, but hide whatever is displeasing*. Let him paint his simplicity

---

* In the following beautiful lines of the first Eclogue, Virgil has, in the true spirit of a pastoral poet, brought together as agreeable an assemblage of images of rural pleasure as can any where be found:

Fortunate senex! hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros frigus captabis opacum.
Hinc tibi, quæ semper vicino ab limite sepes,
Hyblæis apibus, florem depasta salicti,
Sæpe levi somnum suadebit inire susurro,
Hinc altâ sub rupe canet frondator ad auras;
Nec tamen interea, raucæ, tua cura, palumbes,
Nec gemere aëriâ cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

Happy old man! here mid th' accustom'd streams;
And sacred springs you'll shun the scorching beams;
While from yon willow fence, thy pasture's bound,
The bees that suck their flowery stores around

and innocence to the full; but cover its rudeness and misery. Distresses, indeed, and anxieties, he may attribute to it; for it would be perfectly unnatural to suppose any condition of human life to be without them; but they must be of such a nature, as not to shock the fancy with any thing peculiarly disgusting in the pastoral life. The shepherd may well be afflicted for the displeasure of his mistress, or for the loss of a favourite lamb. It is a sufficient recommendation of any state, to have only such evils as these to deplore. In short, it is the pastoral life somewhat embellished and beautified, at least seen on its fairest side only, that the poet ought to present to us. But let him take care, that, in embellishing nature, he do not altogether disguise her; or pretend to join with rural simplicity and happiness, such improvements as are unnatural and foreign to it. If it be not exactly real life which he presents to us, it must, however, be somewhat that resembles it. This, in my opinion, is the general idea of pastoral poetry. But, in order to examine it more particularly, let us consider, first, the scenery; next the charac-

---

Shall sweetly mingle, with the whispering boughs,
Their lulling murmurs, and invite repose.
While from steep rocks the pruner's song is heard;
Nor the soft cooing dove, thy fav'rite bird,
Meanwhile shall cease to breathe her melting strain,
Nor turtles from th' aërial elms to 'plain. WARTON.

ters; and lastly, the subjects and actions which this sort of composition should exhibit.

As to the scene, it is clear, that it must always be laid in the country, and much of the poet's merit depends on describing it beautifully. Virgil is in this respect, excelled by Theocritus, whose descriptions of natural beauties are richer, and more picturesque than those of the other*. In

---

* What rural scenery, for instance, can be painted in more lively colours than the following description exhibits.

——ἔν τε βαθείαις
Ἀδείας σχίνοιο χαμευνεσιν ἐκλειθημες
Ἔν τε νεοτμάτοισι γεγαθοτες ὀιναρέοισι.
Πολλαί δ' ἄμμιν ὕτερθε κατα κρατὸς δονεὸντο·
Αἰγειροι πτελέαι τε· το δ' ἐγγίθεν ἱερὸν ὀδωρ
Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρυσδεν.
Τοὶ δὲ ποτι σκιεραῖς οροδαμνίσιν αὐθαλίωνες
Τεττίγες λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πόνον. ἁ δ' ὀλολυγων
Τηλόθεν ἐν πυκιναῖσι βάτων τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθαις.
Ἄειδον κόρυδοι και ἀκωθιδες, ἔστενε τρύγων·
Πωτωντο ξανθαί περι πίδακας αμφι μέλισσαι.
Πάντ' ὤσδεν θέρεος μαλα πίονος; ὤσδε δ' ὠπώρης·
Ὄχναι μὲν πὰρ ποσσὶ, παρα πλευραισι δε μαλα
Δαψιλέως ἄμμιν ἐκυλίνδετο· τοι δ' εκεχυντο
Ὄρπακες βρα βύλοισι κατωξυϊθοντες ἔρασδε·

THEOCRIT. Idyll. vii. 132.

——on soft beds recline
Of lentisk, and young branches of the vine;
Poplars and elms above, their foilage spread,
Lent a cool shade, and wav'd the breezy head;

every pastoral, a scene, or rural prospect, should be distinctly drawn, and set before us. It is not enough, that we have those unmeaning groups of violets and roses, of birds, and brooks, and breezes, which our common pastoral-mongers throw together, and which are perpetually recurring upon us without variation. A good poet ought to give us such a landscape as a painter could copy after. His objects must be particularised: the stream, the rock, or the tree, must each of them, stand forth, so as to make a figure in the imagination, and to give us a pleasing conception of the place where we are. A single object, happily introduced, will sometimes distinguish and characterise a whole scene; such as the antique rustic sepulchre, a very beautiful object in a landscape;

Below, a stream, from the nymphs sacred cave,
In free meanders led its murm'ring wave:
In the warm sun-beams, verdant shades among,
Shrill grasshoppers renewed their plaintive song;
At distance far, conceal'd in shades, alone,
Sweet Philomela poured her tuneful moan:
The lark, the goldfinch, warbled lays of love,
And sweetly pensive coo'd the turtle dove:
While honey bees, for ever on the wing,
Humm'd round the flowers, or sipt the silver spring,
The rich, ripe season, gratified the sense
With summer's sweets, and autumn's redolence.
Apples and pears lay strew'd in heaps around,
And the plum's loaded branches kiss'd the ground.

FAWKES.

which Virgil has set before us, and which he has taken from Theocritus:

> Hinc adeo media est nobis via; jamque sepulchrum
> Incipit apparere Bianoris; hic ubi densas
> Agricolæ stringunt frondes—— Ecl. IX.*

Not only in professed descriptions of the scenery, but in the frequent allusions to natural objects, which occur, of course, in pastorals, the poet must, above all things, study variety. He must diversify his face of nature, by presenting to us new images; or otherwise he will soon become insipid with those known topics of description, which were original, it is true, in the first poets, who copied them from nature, but which are now worn threadbare by incessant imitation. It is also incumbent on him, to suit the scenery to the subject of the pastoral; and, according as it is of a gay or a melancholy kind, to exhibit nature under such forms as may correspond with the emotions or sentiments which he describes. Thus Virgil, in his second Eclogue, which contains the lamentation of a despairing lover, gives, with propriety, a gloomy appearance to the scene:

---

* ——To our mid journey are we come,
I see the top of Old Bianor's tomb;
Here, Mæris, where the swains thick branches prune,
And strew their leaves, our voices let us tune.
WARTON.

Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos,
Assiduè veniebat; ibi hæc incondita solus
Montibus et sylvis studio jactabat inani *.

WITH regard to the characters, or persons, which are proper to be introduced into pastorals, it is not enough that they be persons residing in the country. The adventures, or the discourses of courtiers or citizens, in the country, are not what we look for in such writings; we expect to be entertained by shepherds, or persons wholly engaged in rural occupations; whose innocence and freedom from the cares of the world may, in our imagination, form an agreeable contrast with the manners and characters of those who are engaged in the bustle of life.

ONE of the principal difficulties which here occurs has been already hinted; that of keeping the exact medium between too much rusticity on the one hand, and too much refinement on the other. The shepherd, assuredly, must be plain and unaffected in his manner of thinking, on all subjects. An amiable simplicity must be the ground work of his character. At the same time, there is no necessity for his being dull and insipid.

---

* 'Mid shades of thickest beech he pin'd alone,
To the wild woods and mountains made his moan;
Still day by day, in incoherent strains.
'Twas all he could, despairing told his pains.

WARTON.

He may have good sense and reflection: he may have sprightliness and vivacity; he may have very tender and delicate feelings; since these are, more or less, the portion of men in all ranks of life; and since, undoubtedly, there was much genius in the world, before there were learning, or arts, to refine it. But then he must not subtilize; he must not deal in general reflections, and abstract reasoning; and still less in the points and conceits of an affected gallantry, which surely belong not to his character and situation. Some of these conceits are the chief blemishes of the Italian pastorals; which are otherwise beautiful. When Aminta, in Tasso, is disentangling his mistress's hair from the tree to which a savage had bound it, he is represented as saying: "Cruel tree! how couldst "thou injure that lovely hair which did thee so "much honour? thy rugged trunk was not wor-"thy of such lovely knots. What advantage have "the servants of love, if those precious chains are "common to them, and to the trees*?" Such strained sentiments as these, ill befit the woods. Rural personages are supposed to speak the language of plain sense, and natural feelings. When

---

* Gia di nodo si bei non era degno
Cosi rovido tronco; or che vantaggio
Illanno i servi d' amor, se lor commune
E'con le piante il pretioso laccio?
Pianta crudel! potesti quel bel crine
Offender, tu, ch'a te seo tanto onore?

Atto III. Sc. I.

they describe, or relate, they do it with simplicity, and naturally allude to rural circumstances; as in those beautiful lines of one of Virgil's Eclogues:

Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
(Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem;
Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus,
Jam fragiles poteram a terra contingere ramos.
Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error.*

In another passage, he makes a shepherdess throw an apple at her lover:

Tum fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri †.

This is *naivé*, as the French express it, and perfectly suited to pastoral manners. Mr. Pope wanted to imitate this passage, and, as he thought, to improve upon it. He does it thus:

The sprightly Sylvia trips along the green,
She runs; but hopes she does not run unseen;
While a kind glance at her pursuer flies,
How much at variance are her feet and eyes!

---

* Once with your mother to our fields you came
For dewy apples; thence I date my flame;
The choicest fruit I pointed to your view,
Though young, my raptur'd soul was fix'd on you;
The boughs I just could reach with little arms;
But then, even then, could feel thy powerful charms.
O, how I gaz'd, in pleasing transport tost!
How glow'd my heart in sweet delusion lost! Warton.

† My Phillis me with pelted apples plies;
Then, tripping to the wood the wanton hies,
And wishes to be seen before she flies. Dryden.

This falls far short of Virgil; the natural and pleasing simplicity of the description is destroyed by the quaint and affected turn in the last line: "How much at variance are her feet and eyes."

SUPPOSING the poet to have formed correct ideas concerning his pastoral characters and personages; the next enquiry is, about what is he to employ them? and what are to be the subjects of his Eclogues? For it is not enough, that he gives us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem, of every kind, ought to have a subject which should, in some way interest us. Now, here, I apprehend, lies the chief difficulty of pastoral writing. The active scenes of country life either are, or to most describers appear to be, too barren of incidents. The state of a shepherd, or a person occupied in rural employments only, is exposed to few of those accidents and revolutions which render his situation interesting, or produce curiosity or surprise. The tenor of his life is uniform. His ambition is conceived to be without policy, and his love without intrigue. Hence it is, that of all poems, the most meagre commonly in the subject, and the least diversified in the strain, is the pastoral. From the first lines, we can, generally, guess at all that is to follow. It is either a shepherd who sits down solitary by a brook, to lament the absence or cruelty of his mistress, and to tell us how the trees wither, and the flowers droop, now that she is gone, or we

have two shepherds who challenge one another to sing, rehearsing alternate verses, which have little either of meaning or subject, till the judge rewards one with a studded crook, and another with a beechen bowl. To the frequent repetition of common-place topics of this sort, which have been thrummed over by all eclogue writers since the days of Theocritus and Virgil, is owing much of that insipidity which prevails in pastoral compositions.

I MUCH question, however, whether this insipidity be not owing to the fault of the poets, and to their barren and slavish imitation of the ancient pastoral topics, rather than to the confined nature of the subject. For why may not pastoral poetry take a wider range? Human nature, and human passions are much the same in every rank of life; and wherever these passions operate on objects that are within the rural sphere, there may be a proper subject for pastoral. One would indeed choose to remove from this sort of composition the operations of violent and direful passions, and to present such only as are consistent with innocence, simplicity, and virtue. But under this limitation, there will still be abundant scope for a careful observer of nature to exert his genius. The various adventures which give occasion to those engaged in country life to display their disposition and temper; the scenes of domestic felicity or disquiet; the attachment of friends and of brothers; the rivalship and competitions of lovers; the unex-

pected successes or misfortunes of families, might give occasion to many a pleasing and tender incident; and were more of the narrative and sentimental intermixed with the descriptive in this kind of poetry, it would become much more interesting than it now generally is, to the bulk of readers.*

THE two great fathers of pastoral poetry are, Theocritus and Virgil. Theocritus was a Sicilian; and as he has laid the scene of his eclogues in his own country, Sicily became ever afterwards a sort of consecrated ground for pastoral poetry. His Idyllia, as he has entitled them, are not all of equal merit; nor indeed are they all pastorals; but some of them poems of a quite different nature. In such, however, as are properly pastorals, there are many and great beauties. He is distinguished for the simplicity of his sentiments; for the great sweetness and harmony of his numbers, and for the richness of his scenery and description. He is the original, of which Virgil is the imitator. For most of Virgil's highest beauties in his eclogues are copied from Theocritus; in many places he has done nothing more than translate him. He must be allowed, however, to have imitated him

* The above observations on the barrenness of the common eclogues were written before any translation from the German had made us acquainted in this country with Gesner's Idylls, in which the ideas that had occurred to me for the improvement of pastoral poetry, are fully realized.

with great judgment, and in some respects to have improved upon him. For Theocritus, it cannot be denied, descends sometimes into ideas that are gross and mean, and makes his shepherds abusive and immodest; whereas Virgil is free from offensive rusticity, and at the same time preserves the character of pastoral simplicity. The same distinction obtains between Theocritus and Virgil, as between many other of the Greek and Roman writers. The Greek led the way, followed nature more closely, and shewed more original genius. The Roman discovered more of the polish and correctness of art. We have a few remains of other two Greek poets in the pastoral style, Moschus and Bion, which have very considerable merit; and if they want the simplicity of Theocritus, excel him in tenderness and delicacy.

THE modern writers of pastorals have, generally, contented themselves with copying or imitating the descriptions and sentiments of the ancient poets. Sannazarius, indeed, a famous Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation. He composed Piscatory Eclogues; changing the scene from woods to the sea, and from the life of shepherds to that of fishermen. But the innovation was so unhappy, that he has gained no followers. For the life of fishermen is, obviously, much more hard and toilsome than that of shepherds, and presents to the fancy much less agreeable images. Flocks, and trees, and flowers,

are objects of greater beauty, and more generally relished by men, than fishes and marine productions. Of all the moderns, M. Gesner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the most successful in his pastoral compositions. He has introduced into his Idylls (as he entitles them) many new ideas. His rural scenery is often striking, and his descriptions are lively. He presents pastoral life to us, with all the embellishments of which it is susceptible; but without any excess of refinement. What forms the chief merit of this poet, is, that he writes to the heart; and has enriched the subject of his Idylls with incidents which give rise to much tender sentiment. Scenes of domestic felicity are beautifully painted. The mutual affection of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, as well as of lovers, are displayed in a pleasing and touching manner. From not understanding the language in which M. Gessner writes, I can be no judge of the poetry of his style; but, in the subject and conduct of his pastorals, he appears to me to have outdone all the moderns.

NEITHER Mr. Pope's, nor Mr. Philips's Pastorals do any great honour to the English poetry. Mr. Pope's were composed in his youth; which may be an apology for other faults, but cannot well excuse the barrenness that appears in them. They are written in remarkably smooth and flowing numbers: and this is their chief merit; for

there is scarcely any thought in them which can be called his own; scarcely any description, or any image of nature, which has the marks of being original, or copied from nature herself; but a repetition of the common images that are to be found in Virgil, and in all poets who write of rural themes. Philips attempted to be more simple and natural than Pope; but he wanted genius to support his attempt, or to write agreeably. He, too, runs on the common and beaten topics; and endeavouring to be simple, he becomes flat and insipid. There was no small competition between these two authors, at the time when their pastorals were published. In some papers of the Guardian, great partiality was shewn to Philips, and high praise bestowed upon him. Mr. Pope, resenting this preference, under a feigned name, procured a paper to be inserted in the Guardian, wherein he seemingly carries on the plan of extolling Philips; but in reality satirizes him most severely with ironical praises; and, in an artful covered manner, gives the palm to himself.* About the same time, Mr. Gay published his Shepherd's Week, in six pastorals, which are designed to ridicule that sort of simplicity which Philips and his partizans extolled, and are, indeed, an ingenious burlesque of pastoral writing, when it rises no higher than the manners of modern clowns and rustics. Mr. Shenstone's

* See Guardian, No. 40.

Pastoral Ballad, in four parts, may justly be reckoned, I think, one of the most elegant poems of this kind, which we have in English.

I HAVE not yet mentioned one form in which pastoral writing has appeared in later ages, that is, when extended into a play, or regular drama, where plot, characters, and passions, are joined with the simplicity and innocence of rural manners. This is the chief improvement which the moderns have made on this species of composition; and of this nature, we have two Italian pieces which are much celebrated, Guarini's Pastor Fido, and Tasso's Aminta. Both of these possess great beauties, and are entitled to the reputation they have gained. To the latter the preference seems due, as being less intricate in the plot and conduct, and less strained and affected in the sentiments; and though not wholly free from Italian refinement (of which I already gave one instance, the worst, indeed, that occurs in all the poem), it is, on the whole, a performance of high merit. The strain of the poetry is gentle and pleasing; and the Italian language contributes to add much of that softness, which is peculiarly suited to pastoral*.

* It may be proper to take notice here, that the charge against Tasso for his points and conceits, has sometimes been carried too far. Mr. Addison, for instance, in a paper of the Guardian, censuring his Aminta, gives this example, "That Sylvia enters adorned "with a garland of flowers, and after viewing herself in a foun-

I MUST not omit the mention of another pastoral drama, which will bear being brought into

---

" tain, breaks out in a speech to the flowers on her head, and tells " them, that she did not wear them to adorn herself, but to make " them ashamed." " Whoever can bear this," he adds, " may " be assured, that he has no taste for pastoral." Guard. No. 38. But Tasso's Sylvia, in truth, makes no such ridiculous figure, and we are obliged to suspect that Mr. Addison had not read the Aminta. Daphne, a companion of Sylvia, appears in conversation with Thyrsis, the confidant of Aminta, Sylvia's lover, and in order to shew him that Sylvia was not so simple, or insensible to her own charms, as she affected to be, gives him this instance; that she had caught her one day adjusting her dress by a fountain, and applying now one flower, and now another to her neck; and after comparing their colours with her own, she broke into a smile, as if she had seemed to say, I will wear you, not for my ornaments, but to shew how much you yield to me; and when caught thus admiring herself, she threw away her flowers, and blushed for shame.——This description of the vanity of a rural coquette, is no more than what is natural, and very different from what the author of the Guardian represents it.

This censure on Tasso was not originally Mr. Addison's. Bouhours, in his *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, appears to have been the first who gave this misrepresentation of Sylvia's speech, and founded a criticism on it. Fontenelle, in his Discourse on Pastoral Poetry, followed him in this criticism. Mr. Addison, or whoever was the author of that paper in the Guardian, copied from them both. Mr. Warton, in the prefatory discourse to his translation of Virgil's Eclogues, repeats the observation. Sylvia's speech to the flowers, with which she was adorned, is always quoted as the flagrant instance of the false taste of the Italian poets. Whereas, Tasso gives us no such speech of Sylvia's but only informs us of what her companion supposed her to be thinking, or saying to herself, when she was privately admiring her own beauty. After charging so many eminent

comparison with any composition of this kind, in any language; that is, Allan Ramsay's Gentle

---

critics for having fallen into this strange inaccuracy, from copying one another, without looking into the author whom they censure, it is necessary for me to insert the passage which has occasioned this remark. Daphne speaks thus to Thyrsis:

Hora per dirti il ver, non mi resolvo
Si Silvia è semplicetta, come pare
A le parole, a gli atti. Hier vidi un segno
Che me ne mette in dubbio. Io la trovai
La presso la cittade in quei gran prati,
Ove fra stagni grace un isoletta,
Sovra essa un lago limpido e tranquillo,
Tutta pendente in atto, che parea
Vegheggiar fe medesma, e'nsieme insieme
Chieder consiglio à l'acque, in qual maniera
Dispor dovesse in su la fronte i crini,
E sovra i crini il velo, e sovral velo
I fior, che tenea in grembo; e spesso spesso
Hor prendeva un ligustro, hor una rosa,
E Paccostava al bel candido collo,
A le guancie vermiglie, e de colori
Fea paragone; e poi, ficome lieta
De la vittoria; lampeggiava un riso
Che parea che dicesse; io pur vi vinco;
Ni porto voi per ornamento mio,
Ma porto voi sol per vergogna vostra.
Perche si veggia quanto mi cedete.
Ma mentre ella s'ornava, e vagheggiava
Rivolsi gli occhi a caso, e si fu accorta
Ch'io di la m'era accorta, e vergognando,
Rizzosi tosto, e i fior lasciò cadere:
In tanto io piu ridea del suo rossore,
Ella piu s'arrossio del riso mio.

AMINTA. ATTO II. Sc. ii.

Shepherd. It is a great disadvantage to this beautiful poem, that it is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which, in a short time, will probably be entirely obsolete, and not intelligible; and it is a farther disadvantage that it is so entirely formed on the rural manners of Scotland, that none but a native of that country can thoroughly understand, or relish it. But, though subject to these local disadvantages, which confine its reputation within narrow limits, it is full of so much natural description, and tender sentiment, as would do honour to any poet. The characters are well drawn, the incidents affecting; the scenery and manners lively and just. It affords a strong proof, both of the power which nature and simplicity possess, to reach the heart in every sort of writing; and of the variety of pleasing characters and subjects, with which pastoral poetry, when properly managed, is capable of being enlivened.

I PROCEED next to treat of lyric poetry, or the ode; a species of poetical composition which possesses much dignity, and in which many writers have distinguished themselves, in every age. Its peculiar character is, that it is intended to be sung, or accompanied with music. Its designation implies this. Ode is, in Greek, the same with song or hymn; and lyric poetry imports, that the verses are accompanied with a lyre, or musical instrument. This distinction was not, at first, peculiar

to any one species of poetry. For, as I observed in the last Lecture, music and poetry were coëval, and were, originally, always joined together. But after their separation took place, after bards had begun to make verse compositions, which were to be recited or read, not to be sung, such poems as were designed to be still joined with music or song, were, by way of distinction, called Odes.

In the ode, therefore, poetry retains its first and most ancient form; that form, under which the original bards poured forth their enthusiastic strains, praised their gods and their heroes, celebrated their victories, and lamented their misfortunes. It is from this circumstance, of the ode's being supposed to retain its original union with music, that we are to deduce the proper idea, and the peculiar qualities of this kind of poetry. It is not distinguished from other kinds, by the subjects on which it is employed; for these may be extremely various. I know no distinction of subject that belongs to it, except that other poems are often employed in the recital of actions, whereas sentiments, of one kind or other, form, almost always, the subject of the ode. But it is chiefly the spirit, the manner of its execution, that marks and characterises it. Music and song naturally add to the warmth of poetry. They tend to transport, in a higher degree, both the person who sings and the persons who hear. They justify, therefore, a

a bolder and more passionate strain, than can be supported in simple recitation. On this is formed the peculiar character of the ode. Hence, the enthusiasm that belongs to it, and the liberties it is allowed to take, beyond any other species of poetry. Hence, that neglect of regularity, those digressions, and that disorder which it is supposed to admit; and which, indeed, most lyric poets have not failed sufficiently to exemplify in their practice.

THE effects of music upon the mind are chiefly two; to raise it above its ordinary state, and fill it with high enthusiastic emotions; or to soothe, and melt it into the gentle pleasurable feelings. Hence, the one may either aspire to the former character of the sublime and noble, or it may descend to the latter, of the pleasant and the gay; and between these there is, also, a middle region, of the mild and temperate emotions, which the ode may often occupy to advantage.

ALL odes may be comprised under four denominations. First, sacred odes; hymns addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. Of this nature are the Psalms of David, which exhibit to us this species of lyric poetry in its highest degree of perfection. Secondly, heroic odes, which are employed in the praise of heroes, and in the celebration of martial exploits and great actions. Of this kind are all Pindar's odes, and

some few of Horace's. These two kinds ought to have sublimity and elevation, for their reigning character. Thirdly, moral and philosophical odes, where the sentiments are chiefly inspired by virtue, friendship, and humanity. Of this kind, are many of Horace's odes, and several of our best modern lyric productions; and here the ode possesses that middle region, which, as I observed, it sometimes occupies. Fourthly, festive and amorous odes, calculated merely for pleasure and amusement. Of this nature are all Anacreon's; some of Horace's; and a great number of songs and modern productions, that claim to be of the lyric species. The reigning character of these, ought to be elegance, smoothness, and gaiety.

ONE of the chief difficulties in composing odes, arises from that enthusiasm which is understood to be a characteristic of lyric poetry. A professed ode, even of the moral kind, but more especially if it attempt the sublime, is expected to be enlivened and animated in an uncommon degree. Full of this idea, the poet, when he begins to write an ode, if he has any real warmth of genius, is apt to deliver himself up to it, without controul or restraint; if he has it not, he strains after it, and thinks himself bound to assume the appearance of being all fervour and all flame. In either case, he is in great hazard of becoming extravagant. The licentiousness of writing without order, method, or connection, has infected the ode more

than any other species of poetry. Hence, in the class of heroic odes, we find so few that one can read with pleasure. The poet is out of sight in a moment. He gets up into the clouds; becomes so abrupt in his transitions; so eccentric and irregular in his motions, and of course so obscure, that we essay in vain to follow him, or to partake of his raptures. I do not require, that an ode should be as regular in the structure of its parts, as a didactic, or an epic poem. But still, in every composition, there ought to be a subject; there ought to be parts which make up a whole; there should be a connection of those parts with one another. The transitions from thought to thought may be light and delicate, such as are prompted by a lively fancy; but still they should be such as preserve the connection of ideas, and shew the author to be one who thinks, and not one who raves. Whatever authority may be pleaded for the incoherence and disorder of lyric poetry, nothing can be more certain, than that any composition which is so irregular in its method, as to become obscure to the bulk of readers, is so much worse upon that account.*

---

* " La plupart des ceux qui parlent de l'enthusiasme de " l'ode, en parlent comme s'ils étoient aux-mêmes dans le " trouble qu'ils veulent definir. Ce ne sont que grands mots de " fureur divine, de transports de l'âme, de mouvements, de lu- " mières, qui mis bout-à-bout dans des phrases pompeuses, ne " produisent pourtant aucune idée distincte. Si on les en croit, " l'essence de l'enthusiasme est de ne pouvoir être compris que

THE extravagant liberty which several of the modern lyric writers assume to themselves in the versification, increases the disorder of this species of poetry. They prolong their periods to such a degree, they wander through so many different measures, and employ such a variety of long and short lines, corresponding in rhyme at so great a distance from each other, that all sense of melody is utterly lost. Whereas lyric composition ought, beyond every other species of poetry, to pay attention to melody and beauty of sound; and the versification of those odes may be justly accounted the best, which renders the harmony of the measure most sensible to every common ear.

" par les esprits du prémiere ordre, à la tête desquels ils se sup-
" posent, et dont ils excluent tous ceux que ôsent ne les pas
" entendre.—Le beau désordre de l'ode est un effet de l'art;
" mais il faut prendre garde de donner trop d'étendue à ce terme.
" On autoriseroit par la tous les écarts imaginables. Un poëte
" n'auroit plus qu'a exprimer avec force toutes les pensées qui
" lui viendroient successivement; il se tiendroit dispensé d'en
" examiner le rapport, et de se faire un plan, dont toutes les
" parties se pretassent mutuellement des beautés. Il n'y auroit
" ni commencement, ni milieu, ni fin, dans son ouvrage; et ce-
" pendant l'auteur se croiroit d'autant plus sublime, qu'il seroit
" moins raisonable. Mais qui produiroit une pareille composi-
" tion dans l'esprit du lecteur? Elle ne laisseroit qu'un étour-
" dissement, causé par la magnificence et l'harmonie des paroles,
" sans y faire naître que des idées confuses, qui chasseroient l'une
" ou lautre, au lieu de concourir ensemble à fixer et à eclairer
" l'esprit." OEUVRES DE M. DE LA MOTTE, tome I. Discours sur l'Ode.

PINDAR, the great father of lyric poetry, has been the occasion of leading his imitators into some of the defects I have now mentioned. His genius was sublime; his expressions are beautiful and happy; his descriptions picturesque. But finding it a very barren subject to sing the praises of those who had gained the prize in the public games, he is perpetually digressive, and fills up his poems with fables of the gods and heroes, that have little connection either with his subject, or with one another. The ancients admired him greatly; but as many of the histories of particular families and cities to which he alludes, are now unknown to us, he is so obscure, partly from his subjects, and partly from his rapid, abrupt manner of treating them, that, notwithstanding the beauty of his expression, our pleasure in reading him is much diminished. One would imagine, that many of his modern imitators though the best way to catch his spirit, was to imitate his disorder and obscurity. In several of the chorusses of Euripides and Sophocles, we have the same kind of lyric poetry as in Pindar, carried on with more clearness and connection, and at the same time with much sublimity.

OF all the writers of odes, ancient or modern, there is none, that, in point of correctness, harmony, and happy expression, can vie with Horace. He has descended from the Pindaric rapture to a more moderate degree of elevation; and joins con-

nected thought, and good sense, with the highest beauties of poetry. He does not often aspire beyond that middle region, which I mentioned as belonging to the ode; and those odes, in which he attempts the sublime, are perhaps not always his best *. The peculiar character, in which he excels, is grace and elegance; and in this style of composition, no poet has ever attained to a greater perfection than Horace. No poet supports a moral sentiment with more dignity, touches a gay one more happily, or possesses the art of trifling more agreeably when he chooses to trifle. His language is so fortunate, that with a single word or epithet, he often conveys a whole description to the fancy. Hence he ever has been, and ever will continue to be, a favourite author with all persons of taste.

AMONG the Latin poets of later ages, there have been many imitators of Horace. One of the most distinguished is Casimir, a Polish poet of the last century, who wrote four books of odes. In graceful ease of expression, he is far inferior to

* There is no ode whatever of Horace's, without great beauties. But though I may be singular in my opinion, I cannot help thinking that in some of those odes which have been much admired for sublimity, (such as Ode iv. Lib. 4. "Qualem minis-" trum fulminis alitem," &c.) there appears somewhat of a strained and forced effort to be lofty. The genius of this amiable poet shews itself, according to my judgment, to greater advantage in themes of a more temperate kind.

the Roman. He oftener affects the sublime; and in the attempt, like other lyric writers, frequently becomes harsh and unnatural. But, on several occasions, he discovers a considerable degree of original genius, and poetical fire. Buchanan, in some of his lyric compositions, is very elegant and classical.

AMONG the French, the odes of Jean Baptiste Rousseau have been much and justly celebrated. They possess great beauty, both of sentiment and expression. They are animated, without being rhapsodical; and are not inferior to any poetical productions in the French language.

IN our own language, we have several lyric compositions of considerable merit. Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia, is well known. Mr. Gray is distinguished in some of his odes, both for tenderness and sublimity; and in Dodsley's Miscellanies, several very beautiful Lyric Poems are to be found. As to professed Pindaric Odes, they are, with a few exceptions, so incoherent, as seldom to be intelligible. Cowley, at all times harsh, is doubly so in his Pindaric compositions. In his Anacreontic Odes, he is much happier. They are smooth and elegant; and, indeed, the most agreeable, and the most perfect, in their kind, of all Mr. Cowley's Poems.

LECTURE XL.

DIDACTIC POETRY—DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

HAVING treated of pastoral and lyric poetry, I proceed next to didactic poetry; under which is included a numerous class of writings. The ultimate end of all poetry, indeed of every composition, should be, to make some useful impression on the mind. This useful impression is most commonly made in poetry, by indirect methods; as by fable, by narration, by representation of characters; but didactic poetry openly professes its intention of conveying knowledge and instruction. It differs therefore in the form only, not in the scope and substance, from a philosophical, a moral, or a critical treatise in prose. At the same time, by means of its form, it has several advantages over prose instruction. By the charm of versification and numbers, it renders instruction more agreeable; by the descriptions, episodes, and other embellishments, which it may interweave, it detains and engages the fancy; it fixes also useful

circumstances more deeply in the memory. Hence it is a field, wherein a poet may gain great honour, may display both much genius, and much knowledge and judgment.

IT may be executed in different manners. The poet may choose some instructive subject, and he may treat it regularly, and in form; or without intending a great or regular work, he may only inveigh against particular vices, or make some moral observations on human life and characters, as is commonly done in satires and epistles. All these come under the denomination of didactic poetry.

THE highest species of it, is a regular treatise on some philosophical, grave, or useful subject. Of this nature we have several, both ancient and modern, of great merit and character: such as Lucretius's six books De Rerum Natura; Virgil's Georgics; Pope's Essay on Criticism; Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination; Armstrong on Health; Horace's, Vida's, and Boileau's Art of Poetry.

IN all such works, as instruction is the professed object, the fundamental merit consists in sound thought, just principles, clear and apt illustrations. The poet must instruct; but he must study, at the same time, to enliven his instructions, by the introduction of such figures, and such circumstan-

ces, as may amuse the imagination, may conceal the dryness of his subject, and embellish it with poetical painting. Virgil, in his Georgics, presents us here with a perfect model. He has the art of raising and beautifying the most trivial circumstances in rural life. When he is going to say, that the labour of the country must begin in spring, he expresses himself thus:

Vere novo, gelidus canis cum montibus humor
Liquitur, et Zephyro putris se gleba resolvit;
Depresso incipiat jam tum mihi Taurus aratro
Ingemere, et sulco attritus splendescere vomer.*

INSTEAD of telling his husbandmen in plain language, that his crops will fail through bad management, his language is,

Ileu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum,
Concussaque famem in sylvis solabere quercu.†

---

* While yet the Spring is young, while earth unbinds
Her frozen bosom to the western winds;
While mountains snows dissolve against the sun,
And streams yet new from precipices run;
Ev'n in this early dawning of the year,
Produce the plough and yoke the sturdy steer,
And goad him till he groans beneath his toil,
Till the bright share is buried in the soil. DRYDEN.

† On other crops you may with envy look,
And shake for food the long abandoned oak. DRYDEN.

INSTEAD of ordering him to water his grounds, he presents us with a beautiful landscape:

Ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam
Elicit; illa cadens, raucum per lævia murmur
Saxa ciet; scatebrisque arentia temperat arva.*

IN all didactic works, method and order is essentially requisite; not so strict and formal as in a prose treatise; yet such as may exhibit clearly to the reader a connected train of instruction. Of the didactic poets, whom I before mentioned, Horace, in his Art of Poetry, is the one most censured for want of method. Indeed, if Horace be deficient in any thing throughout many of his writings, it is in this, of not being sufficiently attentive to juncture and connection of parts. He writes always with ease and gracefulness; but often in a manner somewhat loose and rambling. There is, however, in that work, much good sense and excellent criticism; and, if it be considered as intended for the regulation of the Roman Drama, which seems to have been the author's chief pur-

* Behold when burning suns, or Syrius' beams
Strike fiercely on the field and withering stems,
Down from the summit of the neighbouring hills,
O'er the smooth stones he calls the bubbling rills;
Soon as he clears whate'er their passage stay'd,
And marks their future current with his spade,
Before him scattering they prevent his pains,
And roll with hollow murmurs o'er the plains.
WARTON.

pose, it will be found to be a more complete and regular treatise, than under the common notion of its being a system of the whole poetical art.

WITH regard to episodes and embellishments, great liberty is allowed to writers of didactic poetry. We soon tire of a continued series of instructions, especially in a poetical work, where we look for entertainment. The great art of rendering a didactic poem interesting, is to relieve and amuse the reader, by connecting some agreeable episodes with the principal subject. These are always the parts of the work which are best known, and which contribute most to support the reputation of the poet. The principal beauties of Virgil's Georgics lie in digressions of this kind, in which the author has exerted all the force of his genius; such as the prodigies that attended the death of Julius Cæsar, the praises of Italy, the happiness of a country life, the fable of Aristeus, and the moving tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. In like manner, the favourite passages in Lucretius's work, and which alone could render such a dry and abstract subject tolerable in poetry, are the digressions on the evils of superstition the praise of Epicurus and his philosophy, the description of the plague, and several other incidental illustrations, which are remarkably elegant, and adorned with a sweetness and harmony of versification peculiar to that poet. There is indeed nothing in poetry, so entertaining or descriptive

but what a didactic writer of genius may be allowed to introduce in some part of his work; provided always, that such episodes arise naturally from the main subject; that they be not disproportioned in length to it; and that the author know how to descend with propriety to the plain, as well as how to rise to the bold and figured style.

MUCH art may be shewn by a didactic poet, in connecting his episodes happily with his subject. Virgil is also distinguished for his address in this point. After seeming to have left his husbandmen, he again returns to them very naturally by laying hold of some rural circumstance, to terminate his digression. Thus having spoken of the battle of Pharsalia, he subjoins immediately, with much art:

Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis,
Agricolo, incurve terram molitus aratro.
Exesa inveniet scabrâ rubigine pila:
Aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanes,
Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris*.

---

* Then, after length of time, the lab'ring swains
Who turn the turf of these unhappy plains,
Shall rusty arms from the plough'd furrows take,
And over empty helmets pass the rake;
Amus'd at antique titles on the stones,
And mighty relics of gigantic bones. DRYDEN.

IN English, Dr. Akenside has attempted the most rich and poetical form of didactic writing, in his pleasures of the Imagination; and though, in the execution of the whole, he is not equal, he has, in several parts, succeeded happily, and displayed much genius. Dr. Armstrong, in his Art of Preserving Health, has not aimed at so high a strain as the other; but he is more equal, and maintains throughout a chaste and correct elegance.

SATIRES and epistles naturally run into a more familiar style, than solemn philosophical poetry. As the manners and characters, which occur in ordinary life, are their subject, they require being treated with somewhat of the ease and freedom of conversation; and hence it is commonly the "musa pedestris," which reigns in such compositions.

SATIRE, in its first state among the Romans, had a form different from what it afterwards assumed. Its origin is obscure, and has given occasion to altercation among critics. It seems to have been at first a relic of the ancient comedy, written partly in prose, partly in verse, and abounding with scurrility. Ennius and Lucilius corrected its grossness; and at last, Horace brought it into that form, which now gives the denomination to satirical writing. Reformation of manners, is the end which it professes to have in view;

and in order to this end, it assumes the liberty of boldly censuring vice and vicious characters. It has been carried on in three different manners, by the three great ancient satirists, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. Horace's style has not much elevation. He entitles his satires, "Sermones," and seems not to have intended rising much higher than prose put into numbers. His manner is easy and graceful. They are rather the follies and weakness of mankind, than their enormous vices, which he chooses for the object of his satire. He reproves with a smiling aspect; and while he moralizes like a sound philosopher, discovers, at the same time, the politeness of a courtier. Juvenal is much more serious and declamatory. He has more strength and fire, and more elevation of style, than Horace; but is greatly inferior to him in gracefulness and ease. His satire is more zealous, more sharp and pointed, as being generally directed against more flagitious characters. As Scaliger says of him, "ardet, instat, jugulat," whereas Horace's character is "admissus circum "præcordia ludit." Persius has a greater resemblance of the force and fire of Juvenal, than of the politeness of Horace. He is distinguished for sentiments of noble and sublime morality. He is a nervous and lively writer; but withal, often harsh and obscure.

POETICAL epistles, when employed on moral or critical subjects, seldom rise into a higher strain

of poetry than satires. In the form of an epistle, indeed, many other subjects may be handled, and either love poetry, or elegiac, may be carried on; as in Ovid's Epistolæ Herodium, and his Epistolæ de Ponto. Such works as these are designed to be merely sentimental; and as their merit consists in being proper expressions of the passion or sentiment which forms the subject, they may assume any tone of poetry that is suited to it. But didactic epistles, of which I now speak, seldom admit of much elevation. They are commonly intended as observations on authors, or on life and characters; in delivering which, the poet does not purpose to compose a formal treatise, or to confine himself strictly to regular method; but gives scope to his genius on some particular theme which, at the time, has prompted him to write. In all didactic poetry of this kind, it is an important rule "quicquid precipes, esto brevis." Much of the grace, both of satirical and epistolary writing, consists in a spirited conciseness. This gives to such composition an edge and a liveliness, which strike the fancy and keep attention awake. Much of their merit depends also on just and happy representations of characters. As they are not supported by those high beauties of descriptive and poetical language which adorn other compositions, we expect, in return to be entertained with lively paintings of men and manners, which are always pleasing; and in these, a certain sprightliness and turn of wit finds its pro-

per place. The higher species of poetry seldom admit it; but here it is seasonable and beautiful.

In all these respects, Mr. Pope's Ethical Epistles deserve to be mentioned with signal honour, as a model, next to perfect, of this kind of poetry. Here, perhaps, the strength of his genius appeared. In the more sublime parts of poetry, he is not so distinguished. In the enthusiasm, the fire, the force and copiousness of poetic genius, Dryden, though a much less correct writer, appears to have been superior to him. One can scarce think that he was capable of epic, or tragic poetry; but within a certain limited region, he has been outdone by no poet. His translation of the Iliad will remain a lasting monument to his honour, as the most elegant and highly finished translation, that, perhaps, ever was given of any poetical work. That he was not incapable of tender poetry, appears from the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, and from the verses to the memory of an unfortunate Lady, which are almost his only sentimental productions; and which indeed are excellent in their kind. But the qualities for which he is chiefly distinguished are, judgment, and wit, with a concise and happy expression, and a melodious versification. Few poets ever had more wit, and at the same time more judgment, to direct the proper employment of that wit. This renders his Rape of the Lock the greatest masterpiece that perhaps ever was composed, in the

gay and sprightly style; and in his serious works, such as his Essay on Man, and his Ethic Epistles, his wit just discovers itself as much, as to give a proper seasoning to grave reflections. His imitations of Horace are so peculiarly happy, that one is at a loss, whether most to admire the original, or the copy; and they are among the few imitations extant, that have all the grace and ease of an original. His paintings of characters are natural and lively in a high degree; and never was any writer so happy in that concise spirited style, which gives animation to satires and epistles. We are never so sensible of the good effects of rhyme in English verse, as in reading these parts of his works. We see it adding to the style, an elevation which otherwise it could not have possessed; while at the same time he manages it so artfully, that it never appears in the least to encumber him; but, on the contrary, serves to increase the liveliness of his manner. He tells us himself, that he could express moral observations more concisely, and therefore more forcibly, in rhyme, than he could do in prose.

AMONG moral and didactic poets, Dr. Young is of too great eminence to be passed over without notice. In all his works the marks of strong genius appear. His Universal Passion, possesses the full merit of that animated conciseness of style, and lively description of characters, which I mentioned as particularly requisite in satirical

and didactic compositions. Though his wit may often be thought too sparkling, and his sentences too pointed, yet the vivacity of his fancy is so great, as to entertain every reader. In his Night Thoughts, there is much energy of expression; in the three first, there are several pathetic passages; and scattered through them all, happy images and allusions, as well as pious reflections, occur. But the sentiments are frequently over-strained, and turgid; and the style is too harsh and obscure to be pleasing. Among French authors, Boileau has undoubtedly much merit in didactic poetry. Their later critics are unwilling to allow him any great share of original genius or poetic fire.* But his Art of Poetry, his Satires and Epistles, must ever be esteemed eminent, not only for solid and judicious thought, but for correct and elegant poetical expression, and fortunate imitation of the ancients.

FROM didactic, I proceed next to treat of descriptive poetry, where the highest exertions of genius may be displayed. By descriptive poetry, I do not mean any one particular species or form of composition. There are few compositions of any length, that can be called purely descriptive, or wherein the poet proposes to himself no other object but merely to describe, without employing narration, action, or moral sentiment, as the

* Vid. Poetique Françoise de Marmontel.

ground-work of his piece. Description is generally introduced as an embellishment, rather than made the subject of a regular work. But though it seldom forms a separate species of writing, yet into every species of poetical composition, pastoral, lyric, didactic, epic, and dramatic, it both enters and possesses in each of them a very considerable place; so that in treating of poetry, it demands no small attention.

DESCRIPTION is the great test of a poet's imagination, and always distinguishes an original from a second-rate genius. To a writer of the inferior class, nature, when at any time he attempts to describe it, appears exhausted by those who have gone before him in the same track. He sees nothing new, or peculiar, in the object which he would paint; his conceptions of it are loose and vague; and his expressions, of course, feeble and general. He gives us words rather than ideas; we meet with the language indeed of poetical description, but we apprehend the object described very indistinctly. Whereas a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes; he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a strong imagination, which first receives a lively impression of the object; and then, by employing a proper selection of circumstances in describing it, transmits that

impression in its full force to the imagination of others.

In this selection of circumstances, lies the great art of picturesque description. In the first place, they ought not to be vulgar and common ones, such as are apt to pass by without remark; but, as much as possible, new and original, which may catch the fancy, and draw attention. In the next place, they ought to be such as particularize the object described, and mark it strongly. No description that rests in generals, can be good. For we can conceive nothing clearly in the abstract; all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars. In the third place, all the circumstances employed ought to be uniform, and of a piece; that is, when describing a great object, every circumstance brought into view should tend to aggrandize; or, when describing a gay and pleasant one, should tend to beautify, that by this means, the impression may rest upon the imagination, complete and entire; and lastly, the circumstances in description should be expressed with conciseness, and with simplicity; for when either too much exaggerated, or too long dwelt upon and extended, they never fail to enfeeble the impression that is designed to be made. Brevity, almost always, contributes to vivacity. These general rules will be best understood by illustrations founded on particular instances.

Of all professed descriptive compositions, the largest and fullest that I am acquainted with, in any language, is Mr. Thomson's Seasons; a work which possesses very uncommon merit. The style, in the midst of much splendour and strength, is sometimes harsh, and may be censured as deficient in ease and distinctness. But notwithstanding this defect, Thomson is a strong and a beautiful describer; for he had a feeling heart, and a warm imagination. He had studied, and copied nature with care. Enamoured of her beauties, he not only described them properly, but felt their impression with strong sensibility. The impression which he felt, he transmits to his readers; and no person of taste can peruse any one of his Seasons, without having the ideas and feelings which belong to that Season, recalled, and rendered present to his mind. Several instances of most beautiful description might be given from him; such as, the shower in Spring, the morning in Summer, and the man perishing in snow in Winter. But at present, I shall produce a passage of another kind, to shew the power of a single well chosen circumstance, to heighten a description. In his Summer, relating the effects of heat in the torrid zone, he is led to take notice of the pestilence that destroyed the English fleet, at Carthagena, under Admiral Vernon; when he has the following lines:

——you, gallant Vernon, saw
The miserable scene; you pitying saw

To infant weakness sunk the warrior's arms;
Saw the deep-racking pang; the ghastly form;
The lip pale quiv'ring; and the beamless eye
No more with ardour bright; you heard the groans
Of agonizing ships from shore to shore;
Heard nightly plung'd, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.—— L. 1050.

ALL the circumstances here are properly chosen, for setting this dismal scene in a strong light before our eyes. But what is most striking in the picture, is the last image. We are conducted through all the scenes of distress, till we come to the mortality prevailing in the fleet, which a vulgar poet would have described by exaggerated expressions, concerning the multiplied trophies and victories of death. But, how much more is the imagination impressed by this single circumstance, of dead bodies thrown overboard every night; of the constant sound of their falling into the waters; and of the admiral listening to this melancholy sound, so often striking his ear?

Heard nightly plung'd, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.*

---

* The eulogium which Dr. Johnson, in his lives of the Poets, gives of Thomson, is high, and, in my opinion, very just: "As "a writer, he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind; his "mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts, is original. "His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or of "any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of

Mr. Parnell's Tale of the Hermit, is conspicuous, throughout the whole of it, for beautiful descriptive narration. The manner of the hermit's setting forth to visit the world; his meeting with a companion, and the houses in which they are successively entertained, of the vain man, the covetous man, and the good man, are pieces of very fine painting, touched with a light and delicate pencil, overcharged with no superfluous colouring, and conveying to us a lively idea of the

---

" Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own " growth, without transcription, without imitation. He thinks " in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius. " He looks round on nature and life, with the eye which nature " bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes in every " thing presented to its view, whatever there is on which imagi- " nation can delight to be detained; and with a mind that at " once comprehends the vast and attends to the minute. The " reader of the Seasons wonders that he never saw before what " Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what " Thomson impresses. His descriptions of extended scenes, and " general effects, bring before us the whole magnificence of " nature, whether pleasing or dreadful. The gaiety of Spring, " the splendour of Summer, the tranquillity of Autumn, and the " horror of Winter, take, in their turn, possession of the mind. " The poet leads us through the appearances of things, as they " are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and im- " parts to us so much of his own enthusiasm, that our thoughts " expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments." The censure which the same eminent critic passes upon Thomson's diction, is no less just and well founded, that " it is too exu- " berant, and may sometimes be charged with filling the ear " more than the mind."

objects. But of all the English poems in the descriptive style, the richest and most remarkable are, Milton's Allegro and Penseroso. The collection of gay images on the one hand, and of melancholy ones on the other, exhibited in these two small but inimitably fine poems, are as exquisite as can be conceived. They are, indeed, the storehouse whence many succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions of similar subjects; and they alone are sufficient for illustrating the observations which I made concerning the proper selection of circumstances in descriptive writing. Take, for instance, the following passage from the Penseroso:

——I walk unseen
On the dry, smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray,
Through the Heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide watered shore,
Swinging slow with solemn roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,

Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm:
Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may outwatch the Bear
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
Th' immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in his fleshly nook;
And of those dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under-ground.

HERE, there are no unmeaning general expressions; all is particular; all is picturesque; nothing forced or exaggerated; but a simple style, and a collection of strong expressive images, which are all of one class, and recal a number of similar ideas of the melancholy kind: particularly the walk by moonlight; the sound of the curfew-bell heard distant; the dying embers in the chamber; the bellman's call; and the lamp seen at midnight, in the high lonely tower. We may observe, too, the conciseness of the poet's manner. He does not rest long on one circumstance, or employ a great many words, to describe it; which always makes the impression faint and languid; but placing it in one strong point of view, full and clear before the reader, he there leaves it.

" FROM his shield and his helmet," says Homer, describing one of his heroes in battle, " From his

" shield and his helmet, there sparkled an inces-
" sant blaze; like the autumnal star, when it ap-
" pears in its brightness from the waters of the
" ocean." This is short and lively: but when it comes into Mr. Pope's hand, it evaporates in three pompous lines, each of which repeats the same image in different words:

> High on his helm celestial lightnings play,
> His beamy shield emits a living ray;
> Th' unwearied blaze incessant streams supplies,
> Like the red star that fires th' autumnal skies.

It is to be observed, in general, that, in describing solemn or great objects, the concise manner is, almost always, proper. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes can bear to be more amplified and prolonged; as strength is not the predominant quality expected in these. But where a sublime or a pathetic impression is intended to be made, energy is above all things required. The imagination ought then to be seized at once; and it is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.—" His face was without
" form, and dark," says Ossian, describing a ghost; " the stars dim twinkling through his
" form; thrice he sighed over the hero; and thrice
" the winds of the night roared around."

It deserves attention too, that in describing inanimate natural objects, the poet, in order to en-

liven his description; ought alway to mix living beings with them. The scenes of dead and still life are apt to pall upon us, if the poet do not suggest sentiments, and introduce life and action into his description. This is well known to every painter who is a master of his art. Seldom has any beautiful landscape been drawn, without some human being represented on the canvas, as beholding it, or on some account concerned in it.

Hic gelidi fontes, hîc mollia prata Lycori,
Hîc nemus; hîc ipso tecum consumerer ævo*.

THE touching part of these fine lines of Virgil's is the last, which sets before us the interest of two lovers in this rural scene. A long description of the "*fontes*," the "*nemus*," and the "*prata*," in the most poetical modern manner, would have been insipid without this stroke, which, in a few words, brings home to the heart all the beauties of the place: "hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo." It is a great beauty in Milton's Allegro, that it is all alive and full of persons.

Every thing, as I before said, in description, should be as marked and particular as possible, in

---

* Here cooling fountains roll thro' flow'ry meads,
Here woods, Lycoris, lift their verdant heads,
Here could I wear my careless life away,
And in thy arms insensibly decay.
VIRG. Ecl. X. WARTON.

order to imprint on the mind a distinct and complete image. A hill, a river, or a lake, rises up more conspicuous to the fancy, when some particular lake, or river, or hill, is specified, than when the terms are left general. Most of the ancient writers have been sensible of the advantage which this gives to description. Thus, in that beautiful pastoral composition, the Song of Solomon, the images are commonly particularised by the objects to which they allude. "It is the rose of Sharon; "the lily of the valies; the flock which feeds "on Mount Gilead; the stream which comes "from Mount Lebanon. Come with me from "Lebanon, my spouse; look from the top of "Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, "from the lions dens, from the mountains of the "leopards," ch. iv. 8. So Horace:

Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
Vates? quid orat de patera novum
Fundens liquorem? non opimas
Sardinæ segetes feracis;
Non æstuosæ grata Calabriæ
Armenta; non aurum aut ebur Indicum,
Non rura, quæ Liris quietâ
Mordet aquâ, taciturnus amnis*.

Lib. 1. Ode 31.

---

* When at Apollo's hallow'd shrine
The poet hails the pow'r divine,
And here his first libation pours,
What is the blessing he implores?

BOTH Homer and Virgil are remarkable for the talent of poetical description. In Virgil's second Æneid, where he describes the burning and sacking of Troy, the particulars are so well selected and represented, that the reader finds himself in the midst of that scene of horror. The death of Priam, especially, may be singled out as a master-piece of description. All the circumstances of the aged monarch arraying himself in armour, when he finds the enemy making themselves masters of the city; his meeting with his family, who are taking shelter at an altar in the court of the palace, and their placing him in the midst of them; his indignation when he beholds Pyrrhus slaughtering one of his sons; the feeble dart which he throws; with Pyrrhus's brutal behaviour, and his manner of putting the old man to death, are painted in the most affecting manner, and with a masterly hand. All Homer's battles, and Milton's account, both of Paradise and of the Infernal Regions, furnish many beautiful instances of poetical description. Ossian, too, paints in strong and lively colours, though he employs few circumstances;

He nor desires the swelling grain,
That yellows o'er Sardinia's plain,
Nor the fair herds that lowing feed
On warm Calabria's flowery mead;
Nor ivory of spotless shine;
Nor gold forth flaming from the mine;
Nor the rich fields that Liris laves,
And eats away with silent waves. FRANCIS.

and his chief excellency lies in painting to the heart. One of his fullest descriptions is, the following of the ruins of Balclutha: "I have seen the "walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The "fire had resounded within the halls; and the "voice of the people is now heard no more. The "stream of Clutha was removed from its place by "the fall of the walls; the thistle shook there its "lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind. The "fox looked out at the window; the rank grass "waved round his head. Desolate is the dwelling "of Moina. Silence is in the house of her fathers." Shakespeare cannot be omitted on this occasion, as singularly eminent for painting with the pencil of nature. Though it be in manners and characters that his chief excellency lies, yet his scenery also is often exquisite, and happily described by a single stroke, as in that fine line of the "Merchant "of Venice," which conveys to the fancy as natural and beautiful an image as can possibly be exhibited in so few words?

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit, &c.

MUCH of the beauty of descriptive poetry depends upon a right choice of epithets. Many poets, it must be confessed, are too careless in this particular. Epithets are frequently brought in merely to complete the verse, or make the rhyme answer; and hence they are so unmeaning and redundant: expletive words only, which in place

of adding any thing to the description, clog and enervate it. Virgil's "Liquidi fontes," and Horace's "Prata canis albicant pruinis," must, I am afraid, be assigned to this class; for, to denote by an epithet that water is liquid, or that snow is white, is no better than mere tautology. Every epithet should either add a new idea to the word which it qualifies, or at least serve to raise and heighten its known signification. So in Milton,

——Who shall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure, find out
His uncouth way? or spread his airy flight,
Upborn with indefatigable wings,
Over the vast abrupt? B. II.

The epithets employed here plainly add strength to the description, and assist the fancy in conceiving it;—the wandering feet—the unbottomed abyss—the palpable obscure—the uncouth way—the indefatigable wing—serve to render the images more complete and distinct. But there are many general epithets, which, though they appear to raise the signification of the word to which they are joined, yet leave it so undetermined, and are now become so trite and beaten in poetical language as to be perfectly insipid. Of this kind are "barbarous discord—hateful envy—mighty chiefs "—bloody war—gloomy shades—direful scenes," and a thousand more of the same kind which we

meet with occasionally in good poets; but with which poets of inferior genius abound every where, as the great props of their affected sublimity. They give a sort of swell to the language, and raise it above the tone of prose; but they serve not in the least to illustrate the object described; on the contrary, they load the style with a languid verbosity.

SOMETIMES it is in the power of a poet of genius, by one well chosen epithet, to accomplish a description, and by means of a single word, to paint a whole scene to the fancy. We may remark this effect of an epithet in the following fine lines of Milton's Lycidas:

> Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
> Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
> For neither were ye playing on the steep,
> Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie;
> Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
> Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.

AMONG these wild scenes, "Deva's wizard "stream" is admirably imaged; by this one word presenting to the fancy all the romantic ideas of a river flowing through a desolate country, with banks haunted by wizards and enchanters. Akin to this is an epithet which Horace gives to the river Hydaspes. A good man, says he, stands in need of no arms:

Sive per Syrtes iter æstuosas,
Sive facturus per inhospitalem
Caucasum; vel quæ loca fabulosus
Lambit Hydaspes.*

This epithet "fabulosus" one of the commentators on Horace has changed into "sabulosus" or sandy; substituting, by a strange want of taste, the common and trivial epithet of the sandy river, in place of that beautiful picture which the poet gives us, by calling Hydaspes the romantic river, or the scene of adventures and poetic tales.

VIRGIL has employed an epithet with great beauty and propriety, when accounting for Dædalus not having engraved the fortune of his son Icarus:

Bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
Bis patriæ cecidere manus.† ÆN. VI.

---

* Whether through Lybia's burning sands
Our journey leads, or Scythia's lands,
Amidst the unhospitable waste of snows,
Or where the fabulous Hydaspes flows. FRANCIS.

† Here hapless Icarus had found his part,
Had not the father's grief restrain'd his art;
He twice essay'd to cast his son in gold,
Twice from his hand he dropp'd the forming mould.
DRYDEN.

In this translation the thought is justly given; but the beauty of the expression "patriæ manus," which in the original conveys the thought with so much tenderness, is lost.

THESE instances, and observations, may give some just idea of true poetical description. We have reason always to distrust an author's descriptive talents, when we find him laborious and turgid, amassing common-place epithets and general expressions, to work up a higher conception of some object, of which, after all, we can form but an indistinct idea. The best describers are simple and concise. They set before us such features of an object, as, on the first view, strike and warm the fancy: they give us ideas which a statuary or a painter could lay hold of, and work after them; which is one of the strongest and most decisive trials of the real merit of description.

LECTURE XLI.

THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

AMONG the various kinds of poetry, which we are, at present, employed in examining, the ancient Hebrew poetry, or that of the Scriptures, justly deserves a place. Viewing these sacred books in no higher light, than as they present to us the most ancient monuments of poetry extant, at this day, in the world, they afford a curious object of criticism. They display the taste of a remote age and country. They exhibit a species of composition, very different from any other with which we are acquainted, and, at the same time, beautiful. Considered as inspired writings, they give rise to discussions of another kind. But it is our business, at present, to consider them not in a theological, but in a critical view: and it must needs give pleasure, if we shall find the beauty and dignity of the composition adequate to the weight and importance of the matter. Dr. Lowth's learned treatise, "De Sacra Poësi Hebræorum," ought to be perused by all who desire to become

thoroughly acquainted with this subject. It is a work exceedingly valuable, both for the elegance of its composition, and for the justness of the criticism which it contains. In this lecture, as I cannot illustrate the subject with more benefit to the reader, than by following the track of that ingenious author, I shall make much use of his observations.

I NEED not spend many words in showing, that among the books of the Old Testament there is such an apparent diversity in style, as sufficiently discovers which of them are to be considered as poetical, and which as prose compositions. While the historical books, and legislative writings of Moses, are evidently prosaic in the composition, the book of Job, the Psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, a great part of the Prophetical Writings, and several passages scattered occasionally through the historical books, carry the most plain and distinguishing marks of poetical writing.

THERE is not the least reason for doubting, that originally these were written in verse, or some kind of measured numbers; though as the ancient pronunciation of the Hebrew Language is now lost, we are not able to ascertain the nature of the Hebrew verse, or at most can ascertain it but imperfectly. Concerning this point there have been great controversies among learned men, which it

is unnecessary to our present purpose to discuss. Taking the Old Testament in our own translation, which is extremely literal, we find plain marks of many parts of the original being written in a measured style; and the "disjecta membra poëtæ" often show themselves. Let any person read the historical introduction to the book of Job, contained in the first and second chapters, and then go on to Job's speech in the beginning of the third chapter, and he cannot avoid being sensible, that he passes all at once from the region of prose, to that of poetry. Not only the poetical sentiments, and the figured style, warn him of the change, but the cadence of the sentence, and the arrangement of the words are sensibly altered; the change is as great as when he passes from reading Cæsar's Commentaries, to read Virgil's Æneid. This is sufficient to show, that the sacred Scriptures contain, what must be called poetry in the strictest sense of that word; and I shall afterwards show, that they contain instances of most of the different forms of poetical writing. It may be proper to remark in passing, that hence arises a most invincible argument in honour of poetry. No person can imagine that to be a frivolous and contemptible art, which has been employed by writers under divine inspiration, and has been chosen as a proper channel for conveying to the world the knowledge of divine truth.

FROM the earliest times, music and poetry were

cultivated among the Hebrews. In the days of the Judges, mention is made of the schools or colleges of the prophets; where one part of the employment of the persons trained in such schools was, to sing the praises of God, accompanied with various instruments. In the first book of Samuel (chap. x. 7.) we find, on a public occasion, a company of these prophets coming down from the hill where their school was, "prophesying," it is said, "with the psaltery, tabret, and harp before them." But in the days of King David, music and poetry were carried to their greatest height. For the service of the tabernacle, he appointed four thousand Levites, divided into twenty-four courses, and marshalled under several leaders, whose sole business it was to sing hymns, and to perform the instrumental music in the public worship. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were the chief directors of the music; and, from the titles of some Psalms, it would appear that they were also eminent composers of hymns or sacred poems. In chapter xxv. of the first book of Chronicles, an account is given of David's institutions, relating to the sacred music and poetry; which were certainly more costly, more splendid and magnificent, than ever obtained in the public service of any other nation.

THE general construction of the Hebrew poetry is of a singular nature, and peculiar to itself. It consists in dividing every period into correspondent, for the most part into equal members, which

answer to one another, both in sense and sound. In the first member of the period a sentiment is expressed; and in the second member, the same sentiment is amplified, or is repeated in different terms, or sometimes contrasted with its opposite; but in such a manner that the same structure, and nearly the same number of words is preserved. This is the general strain of all the Hebrew poetry. Instances of it occur every where on opening the Old Testament. Thus, in Psalm xcvi. "Sing "unto the Lord a new song—Sing unto the Lord, "all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless "his name—shew forth his salvation from day to "day. Declare his glory among the heathen— "his wonders among all the people. For the "Lord is great, and greatly to be praised—He is "to be feared above all the gods. Honour and "majesty are before him—Strength and beauty "are in his sanctuary." It is owing, in a great measure, to this form of composition, that our version, though in prose, retains so much of a poetical cast. For the version being strictly word for word after the original, the form and order of the original sentence are preserved; which by this artificial structure, this regular alternation and correspondence of parts, makes the ear sensible of a departure from the common style and tone of prose.

THE origin of this form of poetical composition among the Hebrews, is clearly to be deduced

from the manner in which their sacred hymns were wont to be sung. They were accompanied with music, and they were performed by choirs or bands of singers and musicians, who answered alternately to each other. When for instance, one band began the hymn thus: "The Lord reign-"eth, let the earth rejoice;" the chorus, or semi-chorus, took up the corresponding versicle, "Let "the multitude of the isles be glad thereof."—— "Clouds and darkness are round about him," sung the one; the other replied, "Judgment and "righteousness are the habitation of his throne." And in this manner their poetry, when set to music, naturally divided itself into a succession of strophes and antistrophes correspondent to each other; whence it is probable, the antiphon, or responsory, in the public religious service of so many Christian churches, derived its origin.

We are expressly told, in the book of Ezra, that the Levites sung in this manner: "Alter-"natim," or by course (Ezra, iii. 11.); and some of David's Psalms bear plain marks of their being composed in order to be thus performed. The 24th Psalm, in particular, which is thought to have been composed on the great and solemn occasion of the Ark of the Covenant being brought back to Mount Zion, must have had a noble effect when performed after this manner, as Dr. Lowth has illustrated it. The whole people are supposed

to be attending the procession. The Levites and singers, divided into their several courses, and accompanied with all their musical instruments, led the way. After the introduction to the Psalm, in the two first verses, when the procession begins to ascend the sacred mount, the question is put, as by a semi-chorus, " Who shall ascend unto the " hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy " place?" The response is made by the full chorus with the greatest dignity: " He that hath clean " hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up " his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." As the procession approaches to the doors of the Tabernacle, the chorus, with all their instruments, join in this exclamation: " Lift up your heads, " ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting " doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Here the semi-chorus plainly breaks in, as with a lower voice, " Who is this King of Glory?" and at the moment when the ark is introduced into the Tabernacle, the response is made by the burst of the whole chorus: " The Lord, strong and " mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle." I take notice of this instance the rather, as it serves to show how much of the grace and magnificence of the sacred poems, as indeed of all poems, depends upon our knowing the particular occasions for which they were composed, and the particular circumstances to which they were adapted; and how much of this beauty must now be lost to us, through our imperfect acquaintance with many

particulars of the Hebrew history, and Hebrew rites.

THE method of composition which has been explained, by correspondent versicles being universally introduced into the hymns or musical poetry of the Jews, easily spread itself through their other poetical writings, which were not designed to be sung in alternate portions, and which therefore did not so much require this mode of composition. But the mode became familiar to their ears, and carried with it a certain solemn majesty of style, particularly suited to sacred subjects. Hence throughout the prophetical writings, we find it prevailing as much as in the Psalms of David; as, for instance, in the Prophet Isaiah, (chap. xl. 1.) "Arise, shine, for thy light "is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen up-"on thee: For, lo! darkness shall cover the earth, "and gross darkness the people. But the Lord "shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen "upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy "light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This form of writing is one of the great characteristics of the ancient Hebrew poetry; very different from, and even opposite to, the style of the Greek and Roman poets.

INDEPENDENTLY of this peculiar mode of construction, the sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression.

CONCISENESS and strength, are two of its most remarkable characters. One might indeed at first imagine, that the practice of the Hebrew poets, of always amplifying the same thought, by repetition or contrast, might tend to enfeeble their style. But they conduct themselves so as not to produce this effect. Their sentences are always short. Few superfluous words are used. The same thought is never dwelt upon long. To their conciseness and sobriety of expression, their poetry is indebted for much of its sublimity; and all writers who attempt the sublime, might profit much, by imitating, in this respect, the style of the Old Testament. For, as I have formerly had occasion to show, nothing is so great an enemy to the sublime, as prolixity or diffuseness. The mind is never so much affected by any great idea that is presented to it, as when it is struck all at once; by attempting to prolong the impression, we at the same time weaken it. Most of the ancient original poets of all nations are simple and concise. The superfluities and excrescences of style were the result of imitation in after-times; when composition passed into inferior hands, and flowed from art and study, more than from native genius.

NO writings whatever abound so much with the most bold and animated figures, as the sacred books. It is proper to dwell a little upon this article; as, through our early familiarity with

these books, a familiarity too often with the sound of the words, rather than with their sense and meaning, beauties of style escape us in the Scripture, which, in any other book, would draw particular attention. Metaphors, comparisons, allegories, and personifications, are there particularly frequent. In order to do justice to these, it is necessary that we transport ourselves as much as we can into the land of Judea; and place before our eyes that scenery, and those objects with which the Hebrew writers were conversant. Some attention of this kind is requisite, in order to relish the writings of any poet of a foreign country, and a different age. For the imagery of every good poet is copied from nature and real life; if it were not so, it could not be lively; and therefore, in order to enter into the propriety of his images, we must endeavour to place ourselves in his situation. Now we shall find, that the metaphors and comparisons of the Hebrew poets present to us a very beautiful view of the natural objects of their own country, and of the arts and employments of their common life.

NATURAL objects are in some measure common to them with poets of all ages and countries. Light and darkness, trees and flowers, the forest and the cultivated field, suggest to them many beautiful figures. But, in order to relish their figures of this kind, we must take notice, that several of them arise from the particular circum-

stances of the land of Judea. During the summer months, little or no rain falls throughout all that region. While the heats continued, the country was intolerably parched; want of water was a great distress; and a plentiful shower falling, or a rivulet breaking forth, altered the whole face of nature, and introduced much higher ideas of refreshment and pleasure, than the like causes can suggest to us. Hence, to represent distress, such frequent allusions among them, "to a dry "and thirsty land where no water is;" and hence, to describe a change from distress to prosperity, their metaphors are founded on the falling of showers, and the bursting out of springs in the desert. Thus in Isaiah, "The wilderness and the "solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall "rejoice and blossom as the rose. For in the wil-"derness shall waters break out, and streams in "the desert; and the parched ground shall be-"come a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of "water; in the habitation of dragons there shall "be grass, with rushes and reeds." Chap. xxxv. 1, 6, 7. Images of this nature are very familiar to Isaiah, and occur in many parts of his book.

AGAIN, as Judea was a hilly country, it was, during the rainy months, exposed to frequent inundations by the rushing of torrents, which came down suddenly from the mountains, and carried every thing before them; and Jordan, their only great river, annually overflowed its banks. Hence

the frequent allusions to "the noise, and to the "rushings of many waters;" and hence great calamities so often compared to the overflowing torrent, which, in such a country, must have been images particularly striking: "Deep calleth unto "deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy "waves and thy billows are gone over me." Psalm xlii. 7.

THE two most remarkable mountains of the country, were Lebanon and Carmel: the former noted for its height, and the woods of lofty cedars that covered it; the latter, for its beauty and fertility, the richness of its vines and olives. Hence, with the greatest propriety, Lebanon is employed as an image of whatever is great, strong, or magnificent: Carmel of what is smiling and beautiful. "The glory of Lebanon," says Isaiah, "shall be "given to it, and the excellency of Carmel." (xxxv. 2.) Lebanon is often put metaphorically for the whole state or people of Israel, for the temple, for the king of Assyria; Carmel, for the blessings of peace and prosperity. "His counte-"nance is as Lebanon," says Solomon, speaking of the dignity of a man's appearance; but when he describes female beauty, "Thine head is like "mount Carmel." Song, v. 15. and vii. 5.

IT is farther to be remarked under this head, that in the images of the awful and terrible kind, with which the sacred poets abound, they plainly

draw their descriptions from that violence of the elements, and those concussions of nature, with which their climate rendered them acquainted. Earthquakes were not unfrequent; and the tempests of hail, thunder, and lightning, in Judæa and Arabia, accompanied with whirlwinds and darkness, far exceed any thing of that sort which happens in more temperate regions. Isaiah describes, with great majesty, the earth "reeling to "and fro like a drunkard, and removed like a "cottage," (xxiv. 20.) And in those circumstances of terror, with which an appearance of the Almighty is described in the 18th Psalm, when his "pavilion round about him was darkness; "when hailstones and coals of fire were his "voice; and when, at his rebuke, the channels of "the waters are said to be seen, and the foundations of the hills discovered;" though there may be some reference, as Dr. Lowth thinks, to the history of God's descent upon Mount Sinai, yet it seems more probable, that the figures were taken directly from those commotions of nature with which the author was acquainted, and which suggested stronger and nobler images than what now occur to us.

BESIDES the natural objects of their own country, we find the rites of their religion, and the arts and employments of their common life, frequently employed as grounds of imagery among the Hebrews. They were a people chiefly occupied with

agriculture and pasturage. These were arts held in high honour among them; not disdained by their patriarchs, kings, and prophets. Little addicted to commerce, separated from the rest of the world by their laws and their religion; they were, during the better days of their state, strangers in a great measure to the refinements of luxury. Hence flowed, of course, the many allusions to pastoral life, to the "green pastures and "the still waters," and to the care and watchfulness of a shepherd over his flock, which carry to this day so much beauty and tenderness in them, in the 23d Psalm, and in many other passages of the poetical writings of Scripture. Hence, all the images founded upon rural employments, upon the wine-press, the threshing-floor, the stubble and the chaff. To disrelish all such images, is the effect of false delicacy. Homer is at least as frequent, and much more minute and particular, in his similies, founded on what we now call low life; but, in his management of them, far inferior to the sacred writers, who generally mix with their comparisons of this kind somewhat of dignity and grandeur to ennoble them. What inexpressible grandeur does the following rural image in Isaiah, for instance, receive from the intervention of the Deity: "The nations shall rush like the rushings "of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, "and they shall fly far off; and they shall be "chased as the chaff of the mountain before the "wind, and like the down of the thistle before "the whirlwind."

FIGURATIVE allusions, too, we frequently find, to the rites and ceremonies of their religion; to the legal distinctions of things clean and unclean; to the mode of their temple service; to the dress of their priests, and to the most noted incidents recorded in their sacred history; as to the destruction of Sodom, the descent of God upon Mount Sinai, and the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. The religion of the Hebrews included the whole of their laws, and civil constitution. It was full of splendid external rites, that occupied their senses; it was connected with every part of their national history and establishment; and hence, all ideas founded on religion, possessed in this nation, a dignity and importance peculiar to themselves, and were uncommonly fitted to impress the imagination.

FROM all this it results, that the imagery of the sacred poets is, in a high degree, expressive and natural; it is copied directly from real objects, that were before their eyes; it has this advantage, of being more complete within itself, more entirely founded on national ideas and manners, than that of the most other poets. In reading their works, we find ourselves continually in the land of Judæa. The palm-trees, and the cedars of Lebanon, are ever rising in our view. The face of their territory, the circumstances of their climate, the manners of the people, and the august ceremonies of their religion, constantly pass under different forms before us.

THE comparisons employed by the sacred poets are generally short, touching on one point only of resemblance, rather than branching out into little episodes. In this respect, they have perhaps an advantage over the Greek and Roman authors; whose comparisons, by the length to which they are extended, sometimes interrupt the narration too much, and carry too visible marks of study and labour. Whereas, in the Hebrew poets, they appear more like the glowings of a lively fancy, just glancing aside to some resembling object, and presently returning to its track. Such is the following fine comparison, introduced to describe the happy influence of good government upon a people, in what are called the last words of David, recorded in the 2d book of Samuel, (xxiii. 3.): "He "that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the "fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the "morning, when the sun riseth; even a morning "without clouds; as the tender grass springing "out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." This is one of the most regular and formal comparisons in the sacred books.

ALLEGORY, likewise, is a figure frequently found in them. When formerly treating of this figure, I gave for an instance of it, that remarkably fine and well-supported allegory, which occurs in the 80th Psalm, wherein the people of Israel are compared to a vine. Of parables, which form a species of allegory, the prophetical writings are full:

and if to us they sometimes appear obscure, we must remember, that in those early times, it was universally the mode throughout all the eastern nations, to convey sacred truths under mysterious figures and representations.

BUT the poetical figure, which, beyond all others, elevates the style of scripture, and gives it a peculiar boldness and sublimity, is prosopopœia or personification. No personifications employed by any poets, are so magnificent and striking as those of the inspired writers. On great occasions, they animate every part of nature; especially, when any appearance or operation of the Almighty is concerned. "Before him went the pestilence— "the waters saw thee, O God, and were afraid— "the mountains saw thee, and they trembled.— "The overflowing of the water passed by;—the "deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands "on high." When enquiry is made about the place of wisdom, Job introduces the "Deep, say- "ing, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not "in me. Destruction and death say, we have "heard the fame thereof with our ears." That noted sublime passage in the Book of Isaiah, which describes the fall of the King of Assyria, is full of personified objects; the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon breaking forth into exultation on the fall of the tyrant; Hell from beneath, stirring up all the dead to meet him at his coming; and the dead kings introduced as speaking, and joining in

the triumph. In the same strain are these many lively and passionate apostrophes to cities and countries, to persons and things, with which the prophetical writings every where abound. "O "thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere "thou be quiet? put thyself up into the scabbard, "rest and be still. How can it be quiet," (as "the reply is instantly made,) "seeing the Lord "hath given it a charge against Askelon, and "the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it." Jerem. xlvii. 6.

IN general, for it would carry us too far to enlarge upon all the instances, the style of the poetical books of the Old Testament is, beyond the style of all other poetical works, fervid, bold, and animated. It is extremely different from that regular correct expression, to which our ears are accustomed in modern poetry. It is the burst of inspiration. The scenes are not coolly described, but represented as passing before our eyes. Every object, and every person, is addressed and spoken to, as if present. The transition is often abrupt; the connection often obscure; the persons are often changed; figures crowded, and heaped upon one another. Bold sublimity, not correct elegance, is its character. We see the spirit of the writer raised beyond himself, and labouring to find vent for ideas too mighty for his utterance.

AFTER these remarks on the poetry of the

scripture in general, I shall conclude this dissertation, with a short account of the different kinds of poetical composition in the sacred books; and of the distinguishing characters of some of the chief writers.

THE several kinds of poetical composition which we find in scripture, are chiefly the didactic, elegiac, pastoral, and lyric. Of the didactic species of poetry, the book of Proverbs is the principal instance. The nine first chapters of that book are highly poetical, adorned with many distinguished graces, and figures of expression. At the 10th chapter, the style is sensibly altered, and descends into a lower strain, which is continued to the end; retaining however that sententious pointed manner, and that artful construction of period, which distinguish all the Hebrew poetry. The book of Ecclesiastes comes likewise under this head; and some of the Psalms, as the 119th in particular.

OF elegiac poetry, many very beautiful specimens occur in scripture; such as the Lamentation of David over his friend Jonathan; several passages in the prophetical books; and several of David's Psalms, composed on occasions of distress and mourning. The 42d Psalm, in particular, is, in the highest degree, tender and plaintive. But the most regularand perfect elegiac composition in the scripture, perhaps in the whole world,

is the book, entitled the Lamentations of Jeremiah. As the prophet mourns in that book over the destruction of the temple, and the holy city, and the overthrow of the whole state, he assembles all the affecting images which a subject so melancholy could suggest. The composition is uncommonly artificial. By turns, the prophet, and the city Jerusalem, are introduced, as pouring forth their sorrows; and in the end, a chorus of the people send up the most earnest and plaintive supplications to God. The lines of the original too, as may, in part, appear from our translation, are longer than is usual in the other kinds of Hebrew poetry; and the melody is rendered thereby more flowing, and better adapted to the querimonious strain of elegy.

THE Song of Solomon affords us a high exemplification of pastoral poetry. Considered with respect to its spiritual meaning, it is undoubtedly a mystical allegory; in its form, it is a dramatic pastoral, or a perpetual dialogue between personages in the character of shepherds; and, suitably to that form, it is full of rural and pastoral images, from beginning to end.

OF lyric poetry, or that which is intended to be accompanied with music, the Old Testament is full. Besides a great number of hymns and songs, which we find scattered in the historical and prophetical books, such as the song of Mo-

ses, the song of Deborah, and many others of like nature, the whole book of Psalms is to be considered as a collection of sacred odes. In these, we find the ode exhibited in all the varieties of its form, and supported with the highest spirit of lyric poetry; sometimes sprightly, cheerful, and triumphant; sometimes solemn and magnificent; sometimes tender and soft. From these instances, it clearly appears, that there are contained in the holy scriptures, full exemplifications of several of the chief kinds of poetical writing.

AMONG the different composers of the sacred books, there is an evident diversity of style and manner; and to trace their different characters in this view, will contribute not a little towards our reading their writings with greater advantage. The most eminent of the sacred poets are, the author of the book of Job, David, and Isaiah. As the compositions of David are of the lyric kind, there is a greater variety of style and manner in his works, than in those of the other two. The manner in which, considered merely as a poet, David chiefly excels, is the pleasing, the soft, and the tender. In his Psalms, there are many lofty and sublime passages; but in strength of description, he yields to Job; in sublimity, he yields to Isaiah. It is a sort of temperate grandeur, for which David is chiefly distinguished; and to this he always soon returns, when, upon some occasions, he rises above it. The Psalms in which

he touches us most, are those in which he describes the happiness of the righteous, or the goodness of God; expresses the tender breathings of a devout mind, or sends up moving and affectionate supplications to heaven. Isaiah is, without exception, the most sublime of all poets. This is abundantly visible in our translation; and, what is a material circumstance, none of the books of scripture appear to have been more happily translated than the writings of this prophet. Majesty is his reigning character; a majesty more commanding, and more uniformly supported, than is to be found among the rest of the Old Testament poets. He possesses, indeed, a dignity and grandeur, both in his conceptions and expressions, which is altogether unparalleled, and peculiar to himself. There is more clearness and order too, and a more visible distribution of parts, in his book, than in any other of the prophetical writings.

WHEN we compare him with the rest of the poetical prophets, we immediately see in Jeremiah a very different genius. Isaiah employs himself generally on magnificent subjects. Jeremiah seldom discovers any disposition to be sublime, and inclines always to the tender and elegiac. Ezechiel, in poetical grace and elegance, is much inferior to them both; but he is distinguished by a character of uncommon force and ardour. To use the elegant expressions of Bishop Lowth, with regard to this prophet: "Est attrox, vehe-

"mens, tragicus; in sensibus, fervidus, acerbus, "indignabundus; in imaginibus, fecundus, trucu- "lentus, et nonnunquam penè deformis; in dic- "tione grandiloquus, gravis austerus, et interdum "incultus; frequens in repetitionibus, non decoris "aut gratiæ causa, sed ex indignatione et violen- "tia. Quicquid susceperit tractandum id sedulò "persequitur; in eo unicè hæret defixus; a propo- "sito raro deflectens. In cæteris, a plerisque va- "tibus fortasse superatus; sed in eo genere, ad "quod videtur a natura unice comparatus, nimirum, "vi, pondere, impetu, granditate, nemo umquam "eum superavit." The same learned writer compares Isaiah to Homer, Jeremiah to Simonides, and Ezechiel to Æschylus. Most of the book of Isaiah is strictly poetical; of Jeremiah and Ezechiel not above one half can be held to belong to poetry. Among the minor Prophets, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and especially Nahum, are distinguished for poetical spirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah, there is no poetry.

IT only now remains to speak of the book of Job, with which I shall conclude. It is known to be extremely ancient; generally reputed the most ancient of all the poetical books; the author uncertain. It is remarkable that this book has no connection with the affairs or manners of the Jews, or Hebrews. The scene is laid in the land of Uz, or Idumæa, which is a part of Arabia; and the imagery employed is generally of a different kind from what I before showed to be peculiar to

the Hebrew poets. We meet with no allusions to the great events of sacred history, to the religious rites of the Jews, to Lebanon or to Carmel, or any of the peculiarities of the climate of Judæa. We find few comparisons founded on rivers or torrents; these were not familiar objects in Arabia. But the longest comparison that occurs in the book, is to an object frequent and well known in that region, a brook that fails in the season of heat, and disappoints the expectation of the traveller.

THE poetry, however, of the book of Job is not only equal to that of any other of the sacred writings, but is superior to them all, except those of Isaiah alone. As Isaiah is the most sublime, David the most pleasing and tender, so Job is the most descriptive of all the inspired poets. A peculiar glow of fancy, and strength of description, characterise the author. No writer whatever abounds so much in metaphors. He may be said not to describe, but to render visible, whatever he treats of. A variety of instances might be given. Let us remark only those strong and lively colours, with which, in the following passages, taken from the 18th and 20th chapters of his book, he paints the condition of the wicked; observe how rapidly his figures rise before us; and what a deep impression, at the same time, they leave on the imagination. "Knowest thou not this of old, "since man was placed upon the earth, that the "triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy "of the hypocrite but for a moment? Thongh

" his excellency mount up to the heavens, and " his head reach the clouds, yet he shall perish " for ever. He shall fly away as a dream, and " shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away " as a vision of the night. The eye also which " saw him, shall see him no more; they which " have seen him shall say, where is he? He shall " suck the poison of asps; the viper's tongue shall " slay him. In the fulness of his sufficiency, he " shall be in straits; every hand shall come upon " him. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and " the bow of steel shall strike him through. All " darkness shall be hid in his secret places. A " fire not blown shall consume him. The Heaven " shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise " up against him. The increase of his house shall " depart. His goods shall flow away in the day " of wrath. The light of the wicked shall be put " out; the light shall be dark in his tabernacle. " The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and " his own counsel shall cast him down. For he " is cast into a net by his own feet. He walketh " upon a snare. Terrors shall make him afraid " on every side; and the robber shall prevail " against him. Brimstone shall be scattered upon " his habitation. His remembrance shall perish " from the earth, and he shall have no name in " the street. He shall be driven from light into " darkness. They that come after him shall be " astonished at his day. He shall drink of the " wrath of the Almighty."

LECTURE XLII.

EPIC POETRY.

It now remains to treat of the two highest kinds of poetical writing, the epic and the dramatic. I begin with the epic. This Lecture shall be employed upon the general principles of that species of composition: after which, I shall take a view of the character and genius of the most celebrated epic poets.

The epic poem is universally allowed to be, of all poetical works, the most dignified, and, at the same time, the most difficult in execution. To contrive a story which shall please and interest all readers, by being at once entertaining, important, and instructive; to fill it with suitable incidents; to enliven it with a variety of characters, and of descriptions; and throughout a long work, to maintain that propriety of sentiment, and that elevation of style, which the epic character requires, is unquestionably the highest effort of poetical

genius. Hence so very few have succeeded in the attempt, that strict critics will hardly allow any other poems to bear the name of epic, except the Iliad and the Æneid.

THERE is no subject, it must be confessed, on which critics have displayed more pedantry, than on this. By tedious disquisitions, founded on a servile submission to authority, they have given such an air of mystery to a plain subject, as to render it difficult for an ordinary reader to conceive what an epic poem is. By Bossu's definition, it is a discourse invented by art, purely to form the manners of men, by means of instructions disguised under the allegory of some important action, which is related in verse. This definition would suit several of Æsop's Fables, if they were somewhat extended, and put into verse; and, accordingly, to illustrate his definition, the critic draws a parallel, in form between the construction of one of Æsop's Fables, and the plan of Homer's Iliad. The first thing, says he, which either a writer of fables, or of heroic poems, does, is to choose some maxim or point of morality; to inculcate which, is to be the design of his work. Next, he invents a general story, or a series of facts, without any names, such as he judges will be most proper for illustrating his intended moral. Lastly, he particularises his story; that is, if he be a fabulist, he introduces his dog, his sheep, and his wolf; or if he be an epic poet, he looks out

in ancient history for some proper names of heroes to give to his actors; and then his plan is completed.

This is one of the most frigid, and absurd ideas, that ever entered into the mind of a critic. Homer, he says, saw the Grecians divided into a great number of independent states; but very often obliged to unite into one body against their common enemies. The most useful instruction which he could give them in this situation, was, that a misunderstanding between princes is the ruin of the common cause. In order to enforce this instruction, he contrived, in his own mind, such a general story as this. Several princes join in a confederacy against their enemy. The prince, who was chosen as the leader of the rest, affronts one of the most valiant of the confederates, who thereupon withdraws himself, and refuses to take part in the common enterprise. Great misfortunes are the consequence of this division; till, at length, both parties having suffered by the quarrel, the offended prince forgets his displeasure, and is reconciled to the leader; and union being once restored, there ensues complete victory over their enemies. Upon this general plan of his fable, adds Bossu, it was of no great consequence, whether, in filling it up, Homer had employed the names of beasts, like Æsop, or of men. He would have been equally instructive either way. But as he rather fancied to write of heroes, he

pitched upon the wall of Troy for the scene of his fable; he feigned such an action to happen there; he gave the name of Agamemnon to the common leader; that of Achilles, to the offended prince; and so the Iliad arose.

HE that can believe Homer to have proceeded in this manner, may believe any thing. One may pronounce, with great certainty, that an author who should compose according to such a plan; who should arrange all the subject, in his own mind, with a view to the moral, before he had ever thought of the personages who were to be the actors, might write, perhaps, useful fables for children; but as to an epic poem, if he adventured to think of one, it would be such as would find few readers. No person of any taste can entertain a doubt, that the first objects which strike an epic poet are, the hero whom he is to celebrate, and the action, or story, which is to be the groundwork of his poem. He does not sit down, like a philosopher, to form the plan of a treatise of morality. His genius is fired by some great enterprise, which, to him, appears noble and interesting; and which, therefore, he pitches upon as worthy of being celebrated in the highest strain of poetry. There is no subject of this kind, but will always afford some general moral instruction, arising from it naturally. The instruction which Bossu points out, is certainly suggested by the Iliad; and there is another which arises as natu-

rally, and may just as well be assigned for the moral of that poem; namely, that Providence avenges those who have suffered injustice; but that when they allow their resentment to carry them too far, it brings misfortunes on themselves. The subject of the poem is the wrath of Achilles, caused by the injustice of Agamemnon. Jupiter avenges Achilles, by giving success to the Trojans against Agamemnon; but by continuing obstinate in his resentment, Achilles loses his beloved friend Patroclus.

THE plain account of the nature of an epic poem is, the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form. This is as exact a definition, as there is any occasion for on this subject. It comprehends several other poems besides the Iliad of Homer, the Æneid of Virgil, and the Jerusalem of Tasso; which are, perhaps, the three most regular and complete epic works that ever were composed. But to exclude all poems from the epic class, which are not formed exactly upon the same model as these, is the pedantry of criticism. We can give exact definitions, and descriptions of minerals, plants, and animals; and can arrange them with precision, under the different classes to which they belong, because nature affords a visible unvarying standard, to which we refer them. But with regard to works of taste and imagination, where nature has fixed no standard, but leaves scope for beauties of many different kinds,

it is absurd to attempt defining and limiting them, with the same precision. Criticism, when employed in such attempts, degenerates into trifling questions about words and names only. I therefore have no scruple to class such poems, as Milton's Paradise Lost, Lucan's Pharsalia, Statius's Thebaid, Ossian's Fingal and Temora, Camoens' Lusiad, Voltaire's Henriade, Cambray's Telemachus, Glover's Leonidas, Wilkie's Epigoniad, under the same species of composition with the Iliad and the Æneid, though some of them approach much nearer than others to the perfection of these celebrated works. They are, undoubtedly, all epic; that is, poetical recitals of great adventures; which is all that is meant by this denomination of poetry.

THOUGH I cannot, by any means, allow, that it is the essence of an epic poem to be wholly an allegory, or a fable contrived to illustrate some moral truth, yet it is certain that no poetry is of a more moral nature than this. Its effect in promoting virtue, is not to be measured by any one maxim, or instruction, which results from the whole history, like the moral of one of Æsop's Fables. This is a poor and trivial view of the advantage to be derived from perusing a long epic work, that, at the end, we shall be able to gather from it some common-place morality. Its effect arises, from the impression which the parts of the poem separately, as well as the whole taken toge-

ther, make upon the mind of the reader: from the great examples which it sets before us, and the high sentiments with which it warms our hearts. The end which it proposes, is to extend our ideas of human perfection; or in other words, to excite admiration. Now this can be accomplished only by proper representations of heroic deeds, and virtuous characters. For high virtue is the object which all mankind are formed to admire; and, therefore, epic poems are, and must be, favourable to the cause of virtue. Valour, truth, justice, fidelity, friendship, piety, magnanimity, are the objects which, in the course of such compositions, are presented to our minds, under the most splendid and honourable colours. In behalf of virtuous personages, our affections are engaged; in their designs, and their distresses, we are interested; the generous and public affections are awakened; the mind is purified from sensual and mean pursuits, and accustomed to take part in great heroic enterprises. It is, indeed, no small testimony in honour of virtue, that several of the most refined and elegant entertainments of mankind, such as that species of poetical composition which we now consider, must be grounded on moral sentiments and impressions. This is a testimony of such weight, that, were it in the power of sceptical philosophers, to weaken the force of those reasonings which establish the essential distinctions between vice and virtue, the writings of epic poets alone were sufficient to refute their false

philosophy; shewing by that appeal which they constantly make to the feelings of mankind in favour of virtue, that the foundations of it are laid deep, and strong, in human nature.

THE general strain and spirit of epic composition, sufficiently mark its distinction from the other kinds of poetry. In pastoral writing, the reigning idea is innocence and tranquillity. Compassion is the great object of tragedy; ridicule, the province of comedy. The predominant character of the epic is, admiration excited by heroic actions. It is sufficiently distinguished from history, both by its poetical form, and the liberty of fiction which it assumes. It is a more calm composition than tragedy. It admits, nay, requires, the pathetic and the violent, on particular occasions; but the pathetic is not expected to be its general character. It requires, more than any other species of poetry, a grave, equal, and supported dignity. It takes in a greater compass of time and action, than dramatic writing admits; and thereby allows a more full display of characters. Dramatic writings display characters chiefly by means of sentiments and passions; epic poetry, chiefly by means of actions. The emotions, therefore, which it raises, are not so violent, but they are more prolonged. These are the general characteristics of this species of composition. But, in order to give a more particular and critical view of it, let us consider the epic poem under

three heads; first, with respect to the subject, or action; secondly, with respect to the actors, or characters; and lastly, with respect to the narration of the poet.

THE action or subject of the epic poem, must have three properties; it must be one; it must be great; it must be interesting.

FIRST, it must be one action, or enterprise, which the poet chooses for his subject. I have frequently had occasion to remark the importance of unity, in many kinds of composition, in order to make a full and strong impression upon the mind. With the highest reason, Aristotle insists upon this, as essential to epic poetry; and it is, indeed, the most material of all his rules respecting it. For it is certain, that, in the recital of heroic adventures, several scattered and independent facts can never affect a reader so deeply, nor engage his attention so strongly, as a tale that is one and connected, where the several incidents hang upon one another, and are all made to conspire for the accomplishment of one end. In a regular epic, the more sensible this unity is rendered to the imagination, the better will be the effect; and for this reason, as Aristotle has observed, it is not sufficient for the poet to confine himself to the actions of one man, or to those which happened during a certain period of time; but the unity must lie in the subject itself, and arise from all the parts combining into one whole.

In all the great epic poems, unity of action is sufficiently apparent. Virgil, for instance, has chosen for his subject, the establishment of Æneas in Italy. From the beginning to the end of the poem, this object is ever in our view, and links all the parts of it together with full connection. The unity of the Odyssey is of the same nature; the return and re-establishment of Ulysses in his own country. The subject of Tasso, is the recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels; that of Milton, the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise; and both of them are unexceptionable in the unity of the story. The professed subject of the Iliad, is the anger of Achilles, with the consequences which it produced. The Greeks carry on many unsuccessful engagements against the Trojans, as long as they are deprived of the assistance of Achilles. Upon his being appeased and reconciled to Agamemnon, victory follows, and the poem closes. It must be owned, however, that the unity, or connecting principle, is not quite so sensible to the imagination here as in the Æneid. For, throughout many books of the Iliad, Achilles is out of sight; he is lost in inaction; and the fancy terminates on no other object, than the success of the two armies whom we see contending in war.

The unity of the epic action is not to be so strictly interpreted, as if it excluded all episodes, or subordinate actions. It is necessary to observe

here, that the term episode is employed by Aristotle, in a different sense from what we now give to it. It was a term originally applied to dramatic poetry, and thence transferred to epic; and by episodes, in an epic poem, it should seem that Aristotle understood the extension of the general fable, or plan of the poem, into all its circumstances. What his meaning was, is, indeed, not very clear; and this obscurity has occasioned much altercation among critical writers. Bossu, in particular, is so perplexed upon this subject, as to be almost unintelligible. But, dismissing so fruitless a controversy, what we now understand by episodes, are certain actions, or incidents, introduced into the narration, connected with the principal action, yet not of such importance as to destroy, if they had been omitted, the main subject of the poem. Of this nature are the interview of Hector with Andromache, in the Iliad; the story of Cacus, and that of Nisus and Euryalus, in the Æneid; the Adventures of Tancred with Erminia and Clorinda, in the Jerusalem; and the prospect of his descendants exhibited to Adam, in the last books of Paradise Lost.

SUCH episodes as these, are not only permitted to an epic poet; but provided they be properly executed, are great ornaments to his work. The rules regarding them are the following:

FIRST, they must be naturally introduced; they must have a sufficient connection with the subject of the poem; they must seem inferior parts that belong to it; not mere appendages stuck to it. The episode of Olinda and Sophronia, in the second book of Tasso's Jerusalem, is faulty, by transgressing this rule. It is too much detached from the rest of the work; and being introduced so near the opening of the poem, misleads the reader into an expectation, that it is to be of some future consequence; whereas it proves to be connected with nothing that follows. In proportion as any episode is slightly related to the main subject, it should always be the shorter. The passion of Dido in the Æneid, and the snares of Armida in the Jerusalem, which are expanded so fully in these poems, cannot with propriety be called episodes. They are constituent parts of the work, and form a considerable share of the intrigue of the poem.

IN the next place, episodes ought to present to us, objects of a different kind from those which go before, and those which follow, in the course of the poem. For it is principally for the sake of variety, that episodes are introduced into an epic composition. In so long a work, they tend to diversify the subject, and to relieve the reader, by shifting the scene. In the midst of combats, therefore, an episode of the martial kind would be out of place; whereas, Hector's visit to An-

dromache in the Iliad, and Erminia's adventure with the shepherd in the seventh book of the Jerusalem, afford us a well-judged and pleasing retreat from camps and battles.

LASTLY, as an episode is a professed embellishment, it ought to be particularly elegant and well-finished; and, accordingly, it is, for the most part, in pieces of this kind, that poets put forth their strength. The episodes of Teribazus and Ariana, in Leonidas, and of the death of Hercules, in the Epigoniad, are the two greatest beauties in these poems.

THE unity of the epic action necessarily supposes, that the action be entire and complete; that is, as Aristotle well expresses it, that it have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Either by relating the whole, in his own person, or by introducing some of his actors to relate what had passed before the opening of the poem, the author must always contrive to give us full information of every thing that belongs to his subject; he must not leave our curiosity, in any article, ungratified; he must bring us precisely to the accomplishment of his plan; and then conclude.

THE second property of the epic action, is, that it be great; that it have sufficient splendour and importance, both to fix our attention, and to justify the magnificent apparatus which the poet

bestows upon it. This is so evidently requisite as not to require illustration; and indeed, hardly any who have attempted epic poetry, have failed in choosing some subject sufficiently important, either by the nature of the action, or by the fame of the personages concerned in it.

IT contributes to the grandeur of the epic subject, that it be not of a modern date, nor fall within any period of history with which we are intimately acquainted. Both Lucan and Voltaire have, in the choice of their subjects, transgressed this rule, and they have, upon that account, succeeded worse. Antiquity is favourable to those high and august ideas which epic poetry is designed to raise. It tends to aggrandize, in our imagination, both persons and events; and what is still more material, it allows the poet the liberty of adorning his subject by means of fiction. Whereas, as soon as he comes within the verge of real and authenticated history, this liberty is abridged. He must either confine himself wholly, as Lucan has done, to strict historical truth, at the expence of rendering his story jejune; or, if he goes beyond it, like Voltaire in his Henriade, this disadvantage follows, that, in well known events, the true and the fictitious parts of the plan do not naturally mingle, and incorporate with each other. These observations cannot be applied to dramatic writing; where the personages are exhibited to us, not so much that we may admire, as that we may

love or pity them. Such passions are much more consistent with the familiar historical knowledge of the persons who are to be the objects of them; and even require them to be displayed in the light, and with the failings of ordinary men. Modern, and well-known history, therefore, may furnish very proper materials for tragedy. But for epic poetry, where heroism is the ground-work, and where the object in view is to excite admiration, ancient or traditionary history is assuredly the safest region. There, the author may lay hold on names, and characters, and events, not wholly unknown, on which to build his story; while, at the same time, by reason of the distance of the period, or of the remoteness of the scene, sufficient licence is left him for fiction and invention.

THE third property required in the epic poem, is, that it be interesting. It is not sufficient for this purpose that it be great. For deeds of mere valour, how heroic soever, may prove cold and tiresome. Much will depend on the happy choice of some subject, which shall, by its nature, interest the public; as when the poet selects for his hero, one who is the founder, or the deliverer, or the favourite of his nation; or when he writes of atchievements that have been highly celebrated, or have been connected with important consequences to any public cause. Most of the great epic poems are abundantly fortunate in this respect,

and must have been very interesting to those ages and countries in which they were composed.

BUT the chief circumstance which renders an epic poem interesting, and which tends to interest, not one age or country alone, but all readers, is the skilful conduct of the author in the management of his subject. He must so contrive his plan, as that it shall comprehend many affecting incidents. He must not dazzle us perpetually with valiant atchievements; for all readers tire of constant fighting and battles; but he must study to touch our hearts. He may sometimes be awful and august; he must often be tender and pathetic; he must give us gentle and pleasing scenes of love, friendship, and affection. The more an epic poem abounds with situations which awaken the feelings of humanity, the more interesting it is; and these form, always, the favourite passages of the work. I know no epic poets so happy in this respect as Virgil and Tasso.

MUCH, too, depends on the characters of the heroes, for rendering the poem interesting; that they be such as shall strongly attach the readers, and make them take part in the dangers which the heroes encounter. These dangers, or obstacles, form what is called the nodus, or the intrigue of the epic poem; in the judicious conduct of which consists much of the poet's art. He must rouse our attention, by a prospect of the difficulties

which seem to threaten disappointment to the enterprise of his favourite personages; he must make these difficulties grow and thicken upon us, by degrees; till, after having kept us, for some time in a state of agitation and suspense, he paves the way, by a proper preparation of incidents, for the winding up of the plot in a natural and probable manner. It is plain, that every tale which is designed to engage attention, must be conducted on a plan of this sort.

A QUESTION has been moved, Whether the nature of the epic poem does not require that it should always end successfully? Most critics are inclined to think, that a successful issue is the most proper; and they appear to have reason on their side. An unhappy conclusion depresses the mind, and is opposite to the elevating emotions which belong to this species of poetry. Terror and compassion are the proper subjects of tragedy; but as the epic poem is of larger compass and extent, it were too much, if, after the difficulties and troubles which commonly abound in the progress of the poem, the author should bring them all at last to an unfortunate issue. Accordingly, the general practice of epic poets is on the side of a prosperous conclusion; not, however, without some exceptions. For two authors of great name, Lucan and Milton, have held a contrary course; the one concluding with the subversion of the Roman liberty; the other, with the expulsion of man from Paradise.

WITH regard to the time or duration of the epic action, no precise boundaries can be ascertained. A considerable extent is always allowed to it, as it does not necessarily depend on those violent passions which can be supposed to have only a short continuance. The Iliad, which is formed upon the anger of Achilles, has, with propriety, the shortest duration of any of the great Epic Poems. According to Bossu, the action lasts no longer than forty-seven days. The action of the Odyssey, computed from the taking of Troy to the peace of Ithaca, extends to eight years and a half; and the action of the Æneid, computed in the same way, from the taking of Troy to the death of Turnus, includes about six years. But if we measure the period only of the poet's own narration, or compute from the time in which the hero makes his first appearance, till the conclusion, the duration of both these last poems is brought within a much smaller compass. The Odyssey, beginning with Ulysses in the Island of Calypso, comprehends fifty-eight days only; and the Æneid, beginning with the storm, which throws Æneas upon the coast of Africa, is reckoned to include, at the most, a year and some months.

HAVING thus treated of the epic action, or the subject of the poem, I proceed next to make some observations on the actors or personages.

As it is the business of an epic poet to copy after nature, and to form a probable interesting tale, he must study to give all his personages proper and well-supported characters, such as display the features of human nature. This is what Aristotle calls, giving manners to the poem. It is by no means necessary, that all his actors be morally good; imperfect, nay, vicious characters may find a proper place; though the nature of epic poetry seems to require that the principal figures exhibited should be such as tend to raise admiration and love, rather than hatred or contempt. But whatever the character be which a poet gives to any of his actors, he must take care to preserve it uniform, and consistent with itself. Every thing which that person says, or does, must be suited to it, and must serve to distinguish him from any other.

Poetic characters may be divided into two kinds, general and particular. General characters are, such as wise, brave, virtuous, without any farther distinction. Particular characters express the species of bravery, of wisdom, of virtue, for which any one is eminent. They exhibit the peculiar features which distinguish one individual from another, which mark the difference of the same moral quality in different men, according as it is combined with other dispositions in their temper. In drawing such particular characters, genius is chiefly exerted. How far each of the

three great epic poets have distinguished themselves in this part of composition, I shall have occasion afterwards to show, when I come to make remarks upon their works. It is sufficient now to mention, that it is in this part Homer has principally excelled; Tasso has come the nearest to Homer; and Virgil has been the most deficient.

IT has been the practice of all epic poets, to select some one personage, whom they distinguish above all the rest, and make the hero of the tale. This is considered as essential to epic composition, and is attended with several advantages. It renders the unity of the subject more sensible, when there is one principal figure, to which, as to a centre, all the rest refer. It tends to interest us more in the enterprise which is carried on; and it gives the poet an opportunity of exerting his talents for adorning and displaying one character, with peculiar splendour. It has been asked, who then is the hero of Paradise Lost? The Devil, it has been answered by some critics; and, in consequence of this idea, much ridicule and censure has been thrown upon Milton. But they have mistaken that author's intention, by proceeding upon a supposition, that, in the conclusion of the poem, the hero must needs be triumphant. Whereas Milton followed a different plan, and has given a tragic conclusion to a poem, otherwise epic in its form. For Adam is undoubtedly his hero; that is, the capital and most interesting figure in his poem.

BESIDES human actors, there are personages of another kind, that usually occupy no small place in epic poetry, I mean the gods, or supernatural beings. This brings us to the consideration of what is called the machinery of the epic poem; the most nice and difficult part of the subject. Critics appear to me to have gone to extremes on both sides. Almost all the French critics decide in favour of machinery, as essential to the constitution of an epic poem. They quote that sentence of Petronius Arbiter, as if it were an oracle, "per ambages, Deorumque ministeria, precipi-"tandus est liber spiritus," and hold, that though a poem had every other requisite that could be demanded, yet it could not be ranked in the epic class, unless the main action was carried on by the intervention of the gods. This decision seems to be founded on no principle or reason whatever, unless a superstitious reverence for the practice of Homer and Virgil. These poets very properly embellished their story by the traditional tales and popular legends of their own country; according to which, all the great transactions of the heroic times were intermixed with the fables of their deities. But does it thence follow, that in other countries, and other ages, where there is not the like advantage of current superstition, and popular credulity, epic poetry must be wholly confined to antiquated fictions, and fairy tales? Lucan has composed a very spirited poem, certainly of the epic kind, where neither gods nor supernatural beings are at all employed. The author of Leo-

nidas has made an attempt of the same kind, not without success; and beyond doubt, wherever a poet gives us a regular heroic story, well connected in its parts, adorned with characters, and supported with proper dignity and elevation, though his agents be every one of them human, he has fulfilled the chief requisites of this sort of composition, and has a just title to be classed with epic writers.

BUT though I cannot admit that machinery is necessary or essential to the epic plan, neither can I agree with some late critics of considerable name, who are for excluding it totally, as inconsistent with that probability and impression of reality, which, they think, should reign in this kind of writing*. Mankind do not consider poetical writings with so philosophical an eye. They seek entertainment from them; and for the bulk of readers, indeed, for almost all men, the marvellous has a great charm. It gratifies and fills the imagination; and gives room for many a striking and sublime description. In epic poetry, in particular, where admiration and lofty ideas are supposed to reign, the marvellous and supernatural find, if any where, their proper place. They both enable the poet to aggrandise his subject, by means of those august and solemn objects which religion intro-

* See Elem. of Criticism, ch. 22.

duces into it; and they allow him to enlarge and diversify his plan, by comprehending within it heaven, and earth, and hell, men and invisible beings, and the whole circle of the universe.

AT the same time, in the use of this supernatural machinery, it becomes a poet to be temperate and prudent. He is not at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases. It must always have some foundation in popular belief. He must avail himself in a decent manner, either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives, or of which he writes, so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature. Whatever machinery he employs, he must take care not to overload us with it; not to withdraw human actions and manners too much from view, nor to obscure them under a cloud of incredible fictions. He must always remember, that his chief business is to relate to men, the actions and the exploits of men; that it is by these principally he is to interest us, and to touch our hearts; and that if probability be altogether banished from his work, it can never make a deep or a lasting impression. Indeed, I know nothing more difficult in epic poetry, than to adjust properly the mixture of the marvellous with the probable; so as to gratify and amuse us with the one, without sacrificing the other. I need hardly observe, that these observations affect not the con-

duct of Milton's work; whose plan being altogether theological, his supernatural beings form not the machinery, but are the principal actors in the poem.

WITH regard to allegorical personages, fame, discord, love, and the like, it may be safely pronounced, that they form the worst machinery of any. In description they are sometimes allowable, and may serve for embellishment; but they should never be permitted to bear any share in the action of the poem. For being plain and declared fictions, mere names of general ideas, to which even fancy cannot attribute any existence as persons, if they are introduced as mingling with human actors, an intolerable confusion of shadows and realities arises, and all consistency of action is utterly destroyed.

IN the narration of the poet, which is the last head that remains to be considered, it is not material whether he relate the whole story in his own character, or introduce some of his personages to relate any part of the action that had passed before the poem opens. Homer follows the one method in his Iliad, and the other in his Odyssey. Virgil has, in this respect, imitated the conduct of the Odyssey; Tasso that of the Iliad. The chief advantage which arises from any of the actors being employed to relate part of the story, is, that it allows the poet, if he chooses it, to open with

some interesting situation of affairs, informing us afterwards of what had passed before that period; and gives him the greater liberty of spreading out such parts of the subject as he is inclined to dwell upon in person, and of comprehending the rest within a short recital. Where the subject is of great extent, and comprehends the transactions of several years, as in the Odyssey and the Æneid, this method therefore seems preferable. When the subject is of smaller compass, and shorter duration, as in the Iliad and the Jerusalem, the poet may, without disadvantage, relate the whole in his own person.

In the proposition of the subject, the invocation of the Muse, and other ceremonies of the introduction, poets may vary at their pleasure. It is perfectly trifling to make these little formalities the object of precise rule, any further, than that the subject of the work should always be clearly proposed, and without affected or unsuitable pomp. For, according to Horace's noted rule, no introduction should ever set out too high, or promise too much, lest the author should not fulfil the expectations he has raised.

What is of most importance in the tenor of the narration, is, that it be perspicuous, animated, and enriched with all the beauties of poetry. No sort of composition requires more strength, dignity, and fire, than the epic poem. It is the re-

gion within which we look for every thing that is sublime in description, tender in sentiment, and bold and lively in expression; and, therefore, though an author's plan should be faultless, and his story ever so well conducted, yet, if he be feeble, or flat in style, destitute of affecting scenes, and deficient in poetical colouring, he can have no success. The ornaments which epic poetry admits, must all be of the grave and chaste kind. Nothing that is loose, ludicrous, or affected, finds any place there. All the objects which it presents ought to be either great, or tender, or pleasing. Descriptions of disgusting or shocking objects should as much as possible be avoided; and therefore the fable of the Harpies, in the third book of the Æneid, and the allegory of Sin and Death, in the second book of Paradise Lost, had been better omitted in these celebrated poems.

LECTURE XLIII.

HOMER'S ILIAD AND ODYSSEY—VIRGIL'S ÆNEID.

As the epic poem is universally allowed to possess the highest rank among poetical works, it merits a particular discussion. Having treated of the nature of this composition, and the principal rules relating to it, I proceed to make some observations on the most distinguished epic poems, ancient and modern.

HOMER claims, on every account, our first attention, as the father, not only of epic poetry, but, in some measure, of poetry in general. Whoever sits down to read Homer, must consider that he is going to read the most ancient book in the world, next to the Bible. Without making this reflection, he cannot enter into the spirit, nor relish the composition of the author. He is not to look for the correctness and elegance of the Augustan age. He must divest himself of our modern ideas of dignity and refinement, and transport his imagination almost three thousand years

back in the history of mankind. What he is to expect, is a picture of the ancient world. He must reckon upon finding characters and manners, that retain a considerable tincture of the savage state; moral ideas, as yet, imperfectly formed; and the appetites and passions of men brought under none of those restraints, to which, in a more advanced state of society, they are accustomed; but bodily strength, prized as one of the chief heroic endowments; the preparing of a meal, and the appeasing of hunger, described as very interesting objects; and the heroes boasting of themselves openly, scolding one another outrageously, and glorying, as we should now think very indecently, over their fallen enemies.

THE opening of the Iliad possesses none of that sort of dignity, which a modern looks for in a great epic poem. It turns on no higher subject, than the quarrel of two chieftains about a female slave. The priest of Apollo beseeches Agamemnon to restore his daughter, who, in the plunder of a city, had fallen to Agamemnon's share of booty. He refuses. Apollo, at the prayer of his priest, sends a plague into the Grecian camp. The augur, when consulted, declares that there is no way of appeasing Apollo, but by restoring the daughter of his priest. Agamemnon is enraged at the augur; professes that he likes this slave better than his wife Clytemnestra; but since he must restore her in order to save the army,

insists to have another in her place; and pitches upon Briseis, the slave of Achilles. Achilles, as was to be expected, kindles into rage at this demand; reproaches him for his rapacity and insolence, and, after giving him many hard names, solemnly swears, that, if he is to be thus treated by the general, he will withdraw his troops, and assist the Grecians no more against the Trojans. He withdraws accordingly. His mother, the goddess Thetis, interests Jupiter in his cause; who, to revenge the wrong which Achilles had suffered, takes part against the Greeks, and suffers them to fall into great and long distress; until Achilles is pacified, and reconciliation brought about between him and Agamemnon.

SUCH is the basis of the whole action of the Iliad. Hence rise all those "speciosa miracula," as Horace terms them, which fill that extraordinary poem; and which have had the power of interesting almost all the nations of Europe during every age, since the days of Homer. The general admiration commanded by a poetical plan, so very different from what any one would have formed in our times, ought not, upon reflection, to be matter of surprise. For, besides that a fertile genius can enrich and beautify any subject on which it is employed, it is to be observed, that ancient manners how much soever they contradict our present notions of dignity and refinement, afford, nevertheless materials for poetry, superior, in some

respects, to those which are furnished by a more polished state of society. They discover human nature more open and undisguised, without any of those studied forms of behaviour which now conceal men from one another. They give free scope to the strongest and most impetuous emotions of the mind, which make a better figure in description, than calm and temperate feelings. They shew us our native prejudices, appetites, and desires, exerting themselves without controul. From this state of manners, joined with the advantage of that strong and expressive style, which, as I formerly observed, commonly distinguishes the compositions of early ages, we have ground to look for more of the boldness, ease, and freedom of native genius, in compositions of such a period, than in those of more civilized times. And, accordingly the two great characters of the Homeric poetry are, fire and simplicity. Let us now proceed to make some more particular observations on the Iliad, under the three heads of the subject and action, the characters, and narration of the poet.

THE subject of the Iliad must unquestionably be admitted to be, in the main, happily chosen. In the days of Homer, no object could be more splendid and dignified than the Trojan war. So great a confederacy of the Grecian states, under one leader; and the ten years siege which they carried on against Troy, must have spread far abroad the renown of many military exploits, and

interested all Greece in the traditions concerning the heroes who had most eminently signalized themselves. Upon these traditions, Homer grounded his poem; and though he lived, as is generally believed, only two or three centuries after the Trojan war, yet, through the want of written records, tradition must, by his time, have fallen into the degree of obscurity most proper for poetry; and have left him at full liberty to mix as much fable as he pleased with the remains of true history. He has not chosen, for his subject, the whole Trojan war; but, with great judgment, he has selected one part of it, the quarrel betwixt Achilles and Agamemnon, and the events to which that quarrel gave rise; which, though they take up forty-seven days only, yet include the most interesting, and most critical period of the war. By this management, he has given greater unity to what would have otherwise been an unconnected history of battles. He has gained one hero, or principal character, Achilles, who reigns throughout the work; and he has shown the pernicious effect of discord among confederated princes. At the same time, I admit that Homer is less fortunate in his subject than Virgil. The plan of the Æneid includes a greater compass, and a more agreeable diversity of events; whereas the Iliad is almost entirely filled with battles.

THE praise of high invention has in every age been given to Homer, with the greatest reason.

The prodigious number of incidents, of speeches, of characters divine and human, with which he abounds; the surprising variety with which he has diversified his battles, in the wounds and deaths, and little history-pieces of almost all the persons slain, discover an invention next to boundless. But the praise of judgment is, in my opinion, no less due to Homer, than that of invention. His story is all along conducted with great art. He rises upon us gradually; his heroes are brought out, one after another, to be objects of our attention. The distress thickens as the poem advances; and every thing is so contrived as to aggrandize Achilles, and to render him, as the poet intended he should be, the capital figure.

BUT that wherein Homer excels all writers is the characteristical part. Here, he is without a rival. His lively and spirited exhibition of characters is, in a great measure, owing to his being so dramatic a writer, abounding every where with dialogue and conversation. There is much more dialogue in Homer than in Virgil; or, indeed than in any other poet. What Virgil informs us of by two words of narration, Homer brings about by a speech. We may observe here, that this method of writing is more ancient than the narrative manner. Of this we have a clear proof in the books of the Old Testament, which, instead of narration, abound with speeches, with answers and replies, upon the most familiar subjects. Thus

in the book of Genesis: " Joseph said unto his " brethren, Whence come ye? and they answered, " From the land of Canaan, we come to buy food. " And Joseph said, Ye are spies; to see the na- " kedness of the land ye are come. And they " said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food " are thy servants come; we are all one man's " sons, we are true men, thy servants are no " spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to " see the nakedness of the land you are come. " And they said, Thy servants are twelve bre- " thren, the sons of one man in the land of Ca- " naan; and behold, the youngest is this day with " our father; and one is not. And Joseph said " unto them, This is it that I spake unto you, " saying, ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved; " by the life of Pharaoh, ye shall not go forth hence, " except your youngest brother come hither," &c. Genesis, xlii. 7—15. Such a style as this, is the most simple and artless form of writing, and must, therefore, undoubtedly, have been the most ancient. It is copying directly from nature; giving a plain rehearsal of what passed, or was supposed to pass, in conversation between the persons of whom the author treats. In progress of time, when the art of writing was more studied, it was thought more elegant to compress the substance of conversation into short distinct narrative, made by the poet or historian in his own person; and to reserve direct speeches for solemn occasions only.

THE ancient dramatic method which Homer practised, has some advantages, balanced with some defects. It renders composition more natural and animated, and more expressive of manners and characters; but withal less grave and majestic, and sometimes tiresome. Homer, it must be admitted, has carried his propensity to the making of speeches, too far; and if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them trifling, and some of them plainly unseasonable. Together with the Greek vivacity, he leaves upon our minds some impression of the Greek loquacity also. His speeches, however, are upon the whole characteristic, and lively; and to them we owe, in a great measure, that admirable display which he has given of human nature. Every one who reads him, becomes familiarly and intimately acquainted with his heroes. We seem to have lived among them, and to have conversed with them. Not only has he pursued the single virtue of courage, through all its different forms and features, in his different warriors; but some more delicate characters, into which courage either enters not at all, or but for an inconsiderable part, he has drawn with singular art.

HOW finely, for instance, has he painted the character of Helen, so as, notwithstanding her frailty and her crimes, to prevent her from being an odious object! The admiration with which the old generals behold her, in the third book, when she is coming towards them, presents her to us with

much dignity. Her veiling herself and shedding tears, her confusion in the presence of Priam, her grief and self-accusations at the sight of Menelaus, her upbraiding Paris for his cowardice, and, at the same time, her returning fondness for him, exhibit the most striking features of that mixed female character, which we partly condemn, and partly pity. Homer never introduces her, without making her say something to move our compassion; while, at the same time, he takes care to contrast her character with that of a virtuous matron, in the chaste and tender Andromache.

PARIS himself, the author of all the mischief, is characterised with the utmost propriety. He is, as we should expect him, a mixture of gallantry and effeminacy, He retreats from Menelaus, on his first appearance; but, immediately afterwards, enters into single combat with him. He is a great master of civility, remarkably courteous in his speeches; and receives all the reproofs of his brother Hector with modesty and deference He is described as a person of elegance and taste. He was the architect of his own palace. He is, in the sixth book, found by Hector, burnishing and dressing up his armour; and issues forth to battle with a peculiar gaiety and ostentation of appearance, which is illustrated by one of the finest comparisons in all the Iliad, that of the horse prancing to the river.

HOMER has been blamed for making his hero Achilles of too brutal and inamiable a character. But I am inclined to think, that injustice is commonly done to Achilles, upon the credit of two lines of Horace, who has certainly overloaded his character:

> Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> Jura negat sibi nata; nihil non arrogat armis.

ACHILLES is passionate indeed, to a great degree; but he is far from being a contemner of laws and justice. In the contest with Agamemnon, though he carries it on with too much heat, yet he has reason on his side. He was notoriously wronged; but he submits; and resigns Briseis peaceably, when the heralds come to demand her; only he will fight no longer under the command of a leader who had affronted him. Besides his wonderful bravery and contempt of death, he has several other qualities of a hero. He is open and sincere. He loves his subjects and respects the gods. He is distinguished by strong friendships and attachments; he is, throughout, high-spirited, gallant, and honourable; and allowing for a degree of ferocity which belonged to the times, and enters into the characters of most of Homer's heroes, he is, upon the whole, abundantly fitted to raise high admiration, though not pure esteem.

UNDER the head of characters, Homer's gods

or his machinery, according to the critical term, come under consideration. The gods make a great figure in the Iliad; much greater indeed than they do in the Æneid, or in any other epic poem; and hence Homer has become the standard of poetic theology. Concerning machinery in general, I delivered my sentiments in the former Lecture. Concerning Homer's machinery, in particular, we must observe, that it was not his own invention. Like every other good poet, he unquestionably followed the traditions of his country. The age of the Trojan war approached to the age of the gods and demi-gods, in Greece. Several of the heroes concerned in that war were reputed to be the children of these gods. Of course, the traditionary tales relating to them, and to the exploits of that age, were blended with the fables of the deities. These popular legends, Homer very properly adopted; though it is perfectly absurd to infer from this, that therefore poets arising in succeeding ages, and writing on quite different subjects, are obliged to follow the same system of machinery.

In the hands of Homer, it produces, on the whole, a noble effect; it is always gay and amusing; often, lofty and magnificent. It introduces into his poem a great number of personages, almost as much distinguished by characters as his human actors. It diversifies his battles greatly by the intervention of the gods; and by frequently

shifting the scene from earth to heaven, it gives an agreeable relief to the mind, in the midst of so much blood and slaughter. Homer's gods, it must be confessed, though they be always lively and animated figures, yet sometimes want dignity. The conjugal contentions between Juno and Jupiter, with which he entertains us, and the indecent squabbles he describes among the inferior deities, according as they take different sides with the contending parties, would be very improper models for any modern poet to imitate. In apology for Homer, however, it must be remembered, that according to the fables of those days, the gods are but one remove above the condition of men. They have all the human passions. They drink and feast, and are vulnerable like men: they have children and kinsmen in the opposite armies; and except that they are immortal, that they have houses on the top of Olympus, and winged chariots, in which they are often flying down to earth, and then re-ascending, in order to feast on nectar and ambrosia; they are in truth no higher beings than the human heroes, and therefore very fit to take part in their contentions. At the same time, though Homer so frequently degrades his divinities, yet he knows how to make them appear, in some conjunctures, with the most awful majesty. Jupiter, the father of gods and men, is for the most part, introduced with great dignity; and several of the most sublime conceptions in the Iliad are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Apollo, on great occasions.

WITH regard to Homer's style and manner of writing, it is easy, natural, and in the highest degree animated. It will be admired by such only as relish ancient simplicity, and can make allowance for certain negligences and repetitions, which greater refinement in the art of writing has taught succeeding, though far inferior, poets to avoid. For Homer is the most simple in his style of all the great poets, and resembles most the style of the poetical parts of the Old Testament. They can have no conception of his manner, who are acquainted with him in Mr. Pope's translation only. An excellent poetical performance that translation is, and faithful in the main to the original. In some places, it may be thought to have even improved Homer. It has certainly softened some of his rudenesses, and added delicacy and grace to some of his sentiments. But withal, it is no other than Homer modernised. In the midst of the elegance and luxuriancy of Mr. Pope's language, we lose sight of the old bard's simplicity. I know indeed no author, to whom it is more difficult to do justice in a translation, than Homer. As the plainness of his diction, were it literally rendered, would often appear flat in any modern language; so, in the midst of that plainness, and not a little heightened by it, there are every where breaking forth upon us flashes of native fire, of sublimity and beauty, which hardly any language except his own, could preserve. His versification has been universally acknowledged to be uncom-

monly melodious, and to carry, beyond that of any poet, a resemblance in the sound to the sense and meaning.

In Narration, Homer is, at all times remarkably concise, which renders him lively and agreeable; though in his speeches, as I have before admitted, sometimes tedious. He is every where descriptive; and descriptive by means of those well-chosen particulars, which form the excellency of description. Virgil gives us the nod of Jupiter with great magnificence:

Annuit; et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum.

But Homer, in describing the same thing, gives us the sable eye-brows of Jupiter bent, and his ambrosial curls shaken, at the moment when he gives the nod; and thereby renders the figure more natural and lively. Whenever he seeks to draw our attention to some interesting object, he particularises it so happily, as to paint it in a manner to our sight. The shot of Pandarus's arrow, which broke the truce between the two armies, as related in the fourth book, may be given for an instance: and above all, the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth book, where are all the circumstances of conjugal and parental tenderness: the child affrighted with the view of his father's helmet and crest, and clinging to the nurse; Hector putting off his helmet, taking the child into his arms, and offering up a prayer for him to the

gods; Andromache receiving back the child with a smile of pleasure, and, at the same instant bursting into tears, δακρυοεν γελασασα, as it is finely expressed in the original, form the most natural and affecting picture that can possibly be imagined.

IN the description of battles, Homer particularly excels. He works up the hurry, the terror, and confusion of them in so masterly a manner, as to place the reader in the very midst of the engagement. It is here, that the fire of his genius is most highly displayed; insomuch, that Virgil's battles, and indeed those of most other poets, are cold and inanimated in comparison of Homer's.

WITH regard to similies, no poet abounds so much with them. Several of them are beyond doubt extremely beautiful: such as those of the fires in the Trojan camp compared to the moon and stars by night; Paris going forth to battle, to the war-horse prancing to the river; and Euphorbus slain, to the flowering shrub cut down by a sudden blast: all which are among the finest poetical passages that are any where to be found. I am not, however, of opinion that Homer's comparisons, taken in general, are his greatest beauties. They come too thick upon us; and often interrupt the train of his narration or description. The resemblance on which they are founded, is sometimes not clear; and the objects whence they are taken, are too uniform. His lions, bulls, eagles, and

herds of sheep, recur too frequently; and the allusions in some of his similies, even after the allowances that are to be made for ancient manners, must be admitted to be debasing.*

My observations, hitherto, have been made upon the Iliad only. It is necessary to take some notice of the Odyssey also. Longinus's criticism upon it

---

* The severest critic upon Homer in modern times, M. la Motte, admits all that his admirers urge for the superiority of his genius and talents as a poet: "C'étoit un génie naturellement poëtique, ami des fables et des merveilleux, et porté en général à l'imitation, soit des objets de la nature, soit des sentimens et des actions des hommes. Il avoit l'esprit vaste et fécond; plus elevé que délicat, plus naturel qu'ingenieux, et plus amoureux de l'abondance que du choix.—Il a saisi, par une supériorité de gout, les prémieres idées de l'éloquence dans toutes les genres; il a parlé la langage des toutes les passions; et il a du moins ouvert aux écrivains qui doivent le suivre une infinité de routes, qu'il ne restoit plus qu'à applanir. Il y a apparence que en quelques temps qu'Homère eût veçu, il eût été, du moins, le plus grand Poëte de son païs: et a ne le prendre que dans ce sens, on peut dire, qu'il est le maitre de ceux mêmes qui l'ont surpassé."—Discours sur Homère. Oeuvres de la Motte, Tome 2de. After these high praises of the author, he indeed endeavours to bring the merit of the Iliad very low. But his principal objections turn on the debasing ideas which are there given of the gods, the gross characters and manners of the heroes, and the imperfect morality of the sentiments; which, as Voltaire observes, is like accusing a painter for having drawn his figures in the dress of the times. Homer painted his gods, such as popular tradition then represented them; and described such characters and sentiments, as he found among those with whom he lived.

is not without foundation, that Homer may in this poem be compared to the setting sun, whose grandeur still remains without the heat of his meridian beams. It wants the vigour and sublimity of the Iliad; yet, at the same time, possesses so many beauties, as to be justly entitled to high praise. It is a very amusing poem, and has much greater variety than the Iliad; it contains many interesting stories and beautiful descriptions. We see every where the same descriptive and dramatic genius, and the same fertility of invention that appears in the other work. It descends indeed from the dignity of gods, and heroes, and warlike atchievements; but in recompence, we have more pleasing pictures of ancient manners. Instead of that ferocity which reigns in the Iliad, the Odyssey presents us with the most amiable images of hospitality and humanity; entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landscape of nature; and instructs us by a constant vein of morality and virtue, which runs through the poem.

At the same time, there are some defects which must be acknowledged in the Odyssey. Many scenes in it fall below the majesty which we naturally expect in an epic poem. The last twelve books, after Ulysses is landed in Ithaca, are, in several parts, tedious and languid; and though the discovery, which Ulysses makes of himself to his nurse Euryclea, and his interview with Penelope before she knows him, in the nineteenth

book, are tender and affecting, yet the poet does not seem happy in the great anagnorisis, or the discovery of Ulysses to Penelope. She is too cautious and distrustful, and we are disappointed of the surprise of joy, which we expected on that high occasion.

AFTER having said so much of the father of epic poetry, it is now time to proceed to Virgil, who has a character clearly marked, and quite distinct from that of Homer. As the distinguishing excellencies of the Iliad are, simplicity and fire; those of the Æneid are, elegance and tenderness. Virgil is, beyond doubt, less animated and less sublime than Homer; but to conterbalance this, he has fewer negligencies, greater variety, and supports more of a correct and regular dignity throughout his work.

WHEN we begin to read the Iliad, we find ourselves in the region of the most remote, and even unrefined antiquity. When we open the Æneid, we discover all the correctness, and the improvements of the Augustan age. We meet with no contentions of heroes about a female slave; no violent scolding, nor abusive language, but the poem opens with the utmost magnificence; with Juno, forming designs for preventing Æneas's establishment in Italy, and Æneas himself presented to us with all his fleet in the middle of a storm, which is described in the highest style of poetry.

THE subject of the Æneid is extremely happy; still more so, in my opinion, than either of Homer's poems. As nothing could be more noble, nor carry more of epic dignity, so nothing could be more flattering and interesting to the Roman people, than Virgil's deriving the origin of their state from so famous a hero as Æneas. The object was splendid in itself; it gave the poet a theme, taken from the ancient traditionary history of his own country; it allowed him to connect his subject with Homer's stories, and to adopt all his mythology; it afforded him the opportunity of frequently glancing at all the future great exploits of the Romans, and of describing Italy, and the very territory of Rome, in its ancient and fabulous state. The establishment of Æneas constantly traversed by Juno, leads to a great diversity of events, of voyages, and wars; and furnishes a proper intermixture of the incidents of peace with martial exploits. Upon the whole, I believe, there is no where to be found so complete a model of an epic fable, or story, as Virgil's Æneid. I see no foundation for the opinion, entertained by some critics, that the Æneid is to be considered as an allegorical poem, which carries a constant reference to the character and reign of Augustus Cæsar; or, that Virgil's main design in composing the Æneid, was to reconcile the Romans to the government of that Prince, who is supposed to be shadowed out under the character of Æneas. Virgil, indeed, like the other poets of that age, takes every opportunity which his sub-

ject affords him, of paying court to Augustus*. But, to imagine that he carried a political plan in his view, through the whole poem, appears to me no more than a fanciful refinement. He had sufficient motives, as a poet, to determine him to the choice of his subject, from its being, in itself, both great and pleasing; from its being suited to his genius, and its being attended with the peculiar advantages which I mentioned above, for the full display of poetical talents.

UNITY of action is perfectly preserved; as, from beginning to end, one main object is always kept in view, the settlement of Æneas in Italy, by the order of the gods. As the story comprehends the transactions of several years, part of the transactions are very properly thrown into a recital made by the hero. The Episodes are linked with sufficient connection to the main subject; and the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is according to the plan of ancient machinery, happily formed. The wrath of Juno, who opposes herself to the Trojan settlement in Italy, gives rise to all the difficulties which obstruct Æneas's undertaking, and connects the human with the celestial operations, throughout the whole work. Hence arise the tempest which throws Æneas upon the

---

* As particularly in that noted passage of the 6th book, l. 791.

Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti, sæpius audis, &c.

shore of Africa; the passion of Dido, who endeavours to detain him at Carthage; and the efforts of Turnus, who opposes him in war. Till, at last, upon a composition made with Jupiter, that the Trojan name shall be for ever sunk in the Latin, Juno foregoes her resentment, and the hero becomes victorious.

In these main points, Virgil has conducted his work with great propriety, and shewn his art and judgment. But the admiration due to so eminent a poet, must not prevent us from remarking some other particulars in which he has failed. First, there are scarce any characters marked in the Æneid. In this respect it is insipid, when compared to the Iliad, which is full of characters and life. Achates, and Cloanthus, and Gyas, and the rest of the Trojan heroes who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are so many undistinguished figures, who are in no way made known to us, either by any sentiments which they utter, or any memorable exploits which they perform. Even Æneas himself is not a very interesting hero. He is described, indeed, as pious and brave; but his character is not marked with any of those strokes that touch the heart; it is a sort of cold and tame character; and, throughout his behaviour to Dido, in the fourth book, especially in the speech which he makes after she suspected his intention of leaving her, there appears a certain hardness, and want of relenting, which is far from rendering him

amiable*. Dido's own character is by much the best supported in the whole Æneid. The warmth of her passions, the keenness of her indignation and resentment, and the violence of her whole character, exhibit a figure greatly more animated than any other which Virgil has drawn.

BESIDES this defect of character in the Æneid, the distribution and management of the subject are, in some respects, exceptionable. The Æneid, it is true, must be considered with the indulgence due to a work not thoroughly completed. The six last books are said not to have received the finishing hand of the author, and for this reason, he ordered, by his will, the Æneid to be committed to the flames. But though this may account for incorrectness of execution, it does not apologize for a falling off in the subject, which seems to take place in the latter part of the work. The wars with the Latins are inferior, in point of dignity, to the more interesting objects which had before been presented to us, in the destruction of Troy, the intrigue with Dido, and the descent into hell. And in those Italian wars, there is, perhaps, a more material fault still, in the conduct of the story. The reader, as Voltaire has observed, is tempted to take part with Turnus against

* Num fletu ingemuit nostro? Num lumina flexit?
Num lachrymas victus dedit? Aut miseratus amantem est?
Æn. iv. 368.

Æneas. Turnus a brave young prince, in love with Lavinia, his near relation, is destined for her by general consent, and highly favoured by her mother. Lavinia herself discovers no reluctance to the match: when there arrives a stranger, a fugitive from a distant region, who had never seen her, and who, founding a claim to an establishment in Italy upon oracles and prophecies, embroils the country in war, kills the lover of Lavinia, and proves the occasion of her mother's death. Such a plan is not fortunately laid, for disposing us to be favourable to the hero of the poem; and the defect might have been easily remedied, by the poet's making Æneas, instead of distressing Lavinia, deliver her from the persecution of some rival who was odious to her, and to the whole country.

BUT, notwithstanding these defects, which it was necessary to remark, Virgil possesses beauties which have justly drawn the admiration of ages, and which, to this day, hold the balance in equilibrium between his fame and that of Homer. The principal and distinguishing excellency of Virgil, and which, in my opinion, he possesses beyond all poets, is tenderness. Nature had endowed him with exquisite sensibility; he felt every affecting circumstance in the scenes he describes; and, by a single stroke, he knows how to reach the heart. This, in an epic poem, is the merit next to sublimity; and puts it in an author's power to render his composition extremely interesting to all readers.

THE chief beauty, of this kind, in the Iliad, is, the interview of Hector with Andromache. But, in the Æneid, there are many such. The second book is one of the greatest master-pieces that ever was executed by any hand; and Virgil seems to have put forth there the whole strength of his genius, as the subject afforded a variety of scenes, both of the awful and tender kind. The images of horror, presented by a city burned and sacked in the night, are finely mixed with pathetic and affecting incidents. Nothing, in any poet, is more beautifully described than the death of old Priam; and the family-pieces of Æneas, Anchises, and Creusa, are as tender as can be conceived. In many passages of the Æneid, the same pathetic spirit shines; and they have been always the favourite passages in that work. The fourth book, for instance, relating the unhappy passion and death of Dido, has been always most justly admired, and abounds with beauties of the highest kind. The interview of Æneas with Andromache and Helenus, in the third book; the Episodes of Pallas and Evander, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus and Mezentius, in the Italian wars, are all striking instances of the poet's power of raising the tender emotions. For we must observe, that though the Æneid be an unequal poem, and, in some places, languid, yet there are beauties scattered through it all; and not a few, even in the last six books. The best and most finished books, upon the whole, are, the first, the second, the fourth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth and the twelfth.

VIRGIL'S battles are far inferior to Homer's, in point of fire and sublimity: but there is one important episode, the descent into hell, in which he has outdone Homer in the Odyssey, by many degrees. There is nothing in all antiquity equal, in its kind, to the sixth book of the Æneid. The scenery, and the objects, are great and striking; and fill the mind with that solemn awe, which was to be expected from a view of the invisible world. There runs through the whole description, a certain philosophical sublime; which Virgil's Platonic genius, and the enlarged ideas of the Augustan age, enabled him to support with a degree of majesty, far beyond what the rude ideas of Homer's age suffered him to attain. With regard to the sweetness and beauty of Virgil's numbers, throughout his whole works, they are so well known, that it were needless to enlarge in the praise of them.

UPON the whole, as to the comparative merit of these two great princes of epic poetry, Homer and Virgil; the former must, undoubtedly, be admitted to be the greater genius; the latter, to be the more correct writer. Homer was an original in his art, and discovers both the beauties and the defects which are to be expected in an original author, compared with those who succeed him; more boldness, more nature and ease, more sublimity and force; but greater irregularities and negligences in composition. Virgil has, all along, kept his eye upon Homer; in many places, he has

not so much imitated, as he has literally translated him. The description of the storm, for instance, in the first Æneid, and Æneas's speech upon that occasion, are translations from the fifth book of the Odyssey; not to mention almost all the similies of Virgil, which are no other than copies of those of Homer. The pre-eminence in invention, therefore, must, beyond doubt, be ascribed to Homer. As to the pre-eminence in judgment, though many critics are disposed to give it to Virgil, yet, in my opinion, it hangs doubtful. In Homer, we discern all the Greek vivacity; in Virgil, all the Roman stateliness. Homer's imagination is by much the most rich and copious; Virgil's, the most chaste and correct. The strength of the former lies, in his power of warming the fancy; that of the latter, in his power of touching the heart. Homer's style is more simple and animated; Virgil's more elegant and uniform. The first has on many occasions, a sublimity to which the latter never attains; but the latter, in return, never sinks below a certain degree of epic dignity, which cannot so clearly be pronounced of the former. Not, however, to detract from the admiration due to both these great poets, most of Homer's defects may reasonably be imputed, not to his genius, but to the manners of the age in which he lived; and for the feeble passages of the Æneid, this excuse ought to be admitted, that the Æneid was left an unfinished work.

LECTURE XLIV.

LUCAN'S PHARSALIA—TASSO'S JERUSALEM—CAMOENS' LUSIAD—FENELON'S TELEMACHUS—VOLTAIRE'S HENRIADE—MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

AFTER Homer and Virgil, the next great epic poet of ancient times, who presents himself, is Lucan. He is a poet who deserves our attention, on account of a very peculiar mixture of great beauties with great faults. Though his Pharsalia discover too little invention, and be conducted in too historical a manner, to be accounted a perfectly regular epic poem, yet it were the mere squeamishness of criticism, to exclude it from the epic class. The boundaries, as I formerly remarked, are far from being ascertained by any such precise limit, that we must refuse the epic name to a poem, which treats of great and heroic adventures, because it is not exactly conformable to the plans of Homer and Virgil. The subject of the Pharsalia carries, undoubtedly, all the epic grandeur and dignity; neither does it want unity of object, viz.

the triumph of Cæsar over the Roman liberty. As it stands at present, it is, indeed, brought to no proper close. But either time has deprived us of the last books, or it has been left by the author an incomplete work.

THOUGH Lucan's subject be abundantly heroic, yet I cannot reckon him happy in the choice of it. It has two defects. The one is, that civil wars, especially when as fierce and cruel as those of the Romans, present too many shocking objects to be fit for epic Poetry, and give odious and disgusting views of human nature. Gallant and honourable atchievements furnish a more proper theme for the epic muse. But Lucan's genius, it must be confessed, seems to delight in savage scenes; he dwells upon them too much; and, not content with those which his subject naturally furnished, he goes out of his way to introduce a long episode of Marius and Sylla's proscriptions, which abounds with all the forms of atrocious cruelty.

THE other defect of Lucan's subject is, its being too near the times in which he lived. This is a circumstance, as I observed in a former Lecture, always unfortunate for a poet; as it deprives him of the assistance of fiction and machinery; and thereby renders his work less splendid and amusing. Lucan has submitted to this disadvantage of his subject; and in doing so, has acted with more propriety, than if he had made an unseasonable

attempt to embellish it with machinery; for the fables of the gods would have made a very unnatural mixture with the exploits of Cæsar and Pompey; and instead of raising, would have diminished the dignity of such recent and well-known facts.

With regard to characters, Lucan draws them with spirit and with force. But, though Pompey be his professed hero, he does not succeed in interesting us much in his favour. Pompey is not made to possess any high distinction, either for magnanimity in sentiment, or bravery in action, but, on the contrary, is always eclipsed by the superior abilities of Cæsar. Cato is, in truth, Lucan's favourite character, and wherever he introduces him, he appears to rise above himself. Some of the noblest, and most conspicuous passages in the work, are such as relate to Cato; either speeches put into his mouth, or descriptions of his behaviour. His speech, in particular, to Labienus, who urged him to enquire at the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, concerning the issue of the war [Book ix. 564], deserves to be remarked, as equal, for moral sublimity, to any thing that is to be found in all antiquity.

In the conduct of the story, our author has attached himself too much to chronological order. This renders the thread of his narration broken and interrupted, and makes him hurry us too often from place to place. He is too digressive also;

frequently turning aside from his subject, to give us, sometimes, geographical descriptions of a country; sometimes, philosophical disquisitions concerning natural objects; as, concerning the African serpents in the ninth book, and the sources of the Nile in the tenth.

THERE are, in the Pharsalia, several very poetical and spirited descriptions. But the author's chief strength does not lie, either in narration or description. His narration is often dry and harsh: his descriptions are often over-wrought, and employed too upon disagreeable objects. His principal merit consists in his sentiments, which are generally noble and striking, and expressed in that glowing and ardent manner, which peculiarly distinguishes him. Lucan is the most philosophical, and the most public-spirited poet of all antiquity. He was the nephew of the famous Seneca, the philosopher; was himself a Stoic; and the spirit of that philosophy breathes throughout his poem. We must observe too, that he is the only ancient epic poet whom the subject of his poem really and deeply interested. Lucan recounted no fiction. He was a Roman, and had felt all the direful effects of the Roman civil wars, and of that severe despotism which succeeded the loss of liberty. His high and bold spirit made him enter deeply into this subject, and kindle, on many occasions, into the most real warmth. Hence, he abounds in exclamations and apostrophes, which are, almost

always, well-timed, and supported with a vivacity and fire that do him no small honour.

BUT it is the fate of this poet, that his beauties can never be mentioned, without their suggesting his blemishes also. As his principal excellency is a lively and glowing genius, which appears sometimes in his descriptions, and very often in his sentiments, his great defect in both is, want of moderation. He carries every thing to an extreme. He knows not where to stop. From an effort to aggrandise his objects, he becomes tumid and unnatural: and it frequently happens, that where the second line of one of his descriptions is sublime, the third, in which he meant to rise still higher, is perfectly bombast. Lucan lived in an age, when the schools of the declaimers had begun to corrupt the eloquence and taste of Rome. He was not free from the infection; and too often, instead of shewing the genius of the poet, betrays the spirit of the declaimer.

ON the whole, however, he is an author of lively and original genius. His sentiments are so high, and his fire, on occasions, so great, as to atone for many of his defects; and passages may be produced from him, which are inferior to none in any poet whatever. The characters, for instance, which he draws of Pompey and Cæsar in the first book, are masterly; and the comparison of Pompey to the aged decaying oak, is highly poetical:

——— totus popularibus auris
Impelli, plausuque, sui gaudere theatri;
Nec reparare noves vires multumque priori
Credere fortunæ; stat magnæ nominis umbri.
Qualis, frugifero quercus sublimis in agro,
Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum; nec jam validis radicibus hærens,
Pondere fixa suo est; nudosque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram.
At quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
Et circum sylvæ firmo se robore tollant,
Sola tamen colitur. Sed non in Cæsare tantum
Nomen erat, nec fama ducis; sed nescia virtus
Stare loco; solusque pudor non vincere bello;
Acer et indomitus*——— L. I. 32.

---

* With gifts and liberal bounty sought for fame,
And lov'd to hear the vulgar shout his name;
In his own theatre rejoic'd to sit,
Amidst the noisy praises of the pit.
Careless of future ills that might betide
No aid he sought to prop his falling side,
But on his former fortune much rely'd.
Still seem'd he to possess, and fill his place;
But stood the shadow of what once he was.
So, in the field with Ceres' bounty spread,
Uprears some ancient oak his rev'rend head:
Chaplets, and sacred gifts his boughs adorn,
And spoils of war by mighty heroes worn;
But the first vigour of his root now gone,
He stands dependent on his weight alone;
All bare his naked branches are display'd,
And with his leafless trunk he forms a shade.
Yet though the winds his ruin daily threat,
As every blast would heave him from his seat;

BUT when we consider the whole execution of his poem, we are obliged to pronounce, that his poetical fire was not under the government of either sound judgment, or correct taste. His genius had strength, but not tenderness; nothing of what may be called amœnity or sweetness. In his style, there is abundance of force; but a mixture of harshness, and frequently of obscurity, occasioned by his desire of expressing himself in a pointed and unusual manner. Compared with Virgil, he may be allowed to have more fire and higher sentiments, but in every thing else, falls infinitely below him, particularly in purity, elegance, and tenderness.

AS Statius, and Silius Italicus, though they be poets of the epic class, are too inconsiderable for particular criticism, I proceed next to Tasso, the most distinguished epic poet in modern ages.

Though thousand fairer trees the field supplies,
That rich in youthful verdure round him rise,
Fix'd in his ancient seat, he yields to none,
And wears the honours of the grove alone.
But Cæsar's greatness, and his strength was more,
Than past renown and antiquated power;
'Twas not the fame of what he once had been,
Or tales in old records or annals seen;
But 'twas a valour, restless, unconfin'd,
Which no success could sate, nor limits bind;
'Twas shame, a soldier's shame, untaught to yield,
That blush'd for nothing but an ill-fought field.

ROWE.

His *Jerusalem Delivered*, was published in the year 1574. It is a poem regularly and strictly epic, in its whole construction; and adorned with all the beauties that belong to that species of composition. The subject is, the recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels, by the united powers of Christendom; which, in itself, and more especially according to the ideas of Tasso's age, was a splendid, venerable, and heroic enterprise. The opposition of the Christians to the Saracens, forms an interesting contrast. The subject produces none of those fierce and shocking scenes of civil discord, which hurt the mind in Lucan, but exhibits the efforts of zeal and bravery, inspired by an honourable object. The share which religion possesses in the enterprise, both tends to render it more august, and opens a natural field for machinery, and sublime description. The action too lies in a country, and at a period of time, sufficiently remote to allow an intermixture of fabulous tradition and fiction with true history.

In the conduct of the story, Tasso has shown a rich and fertile invention, which, in a poet, is a capital quality. He is full of events; and those too abundantly various, and diversified in their kind. He never allows us to be tired by mere war and fighting. He frequently shifts the scene; and, from camps and battles, transports us to more pleasing objects. Sometimes the solemnities of religion; sometimes the intrigues of love; at other

times, the adventures of a journey, or even the incidents of pastoral life, relieve and entertain the reader. At the same time, the whole work is artfully connected, and while there is much variety in the parts, there is perfect unity in the plan. The recovery of Jerusalem is the object kept in view through the whole, and with it the poem closes. All the episodes, if we except that of Olindo and Sophronia, in the second book, on which I formerly passed a censure, are sufficiently related to the main subject of the poem.

THE poem is enlivened with a variety of characters, and those too both clearly marked and well supported. Godfrey, the leader of the enterprise, prudent, moderate, brave; Tancred, amorous, generous, and gallant, and well contrasted with the fierce and brutal Argantes; Rinaldo, (who is properly the hero of the poem, and is in part copied after Homer's Achilles,) passionate and resentful, seduced by the allurements of Armida; but a personage, on the whole, of much zeal, honour, and heroism. The brave and high-minded Solyman, the tender Erminia, the artful and violent Armida, the masculine Clorinda, are all of them well drawn and animated figures. In the characteristical part, Tasso is indeed remarkably distinguished; he is, in this respect, superior to Virgil; and yields to no poet, except Homer.

HE abounds very much with machinery; and in

this part of the work his merit is more dubious. Wherever celestial beings are made to interpose, his machinery is noble. God looking down upon the hosts, and, on different occasions, sending an angel to check the Pagans, and, to rebuke the evil spirits, produces a sublime effect. The description of hell too, with the appearance and speech of Satan, in the beginning of the fourth book, is extremely striking; and plainly has been imitated by Milton, though he must be allowed to have improved upon it. But the devils, the enchanters, and the conjurers, act too great a part throughout Tasso's poem; and form a sort of dark and gloomy machinery, not pleasing to the imagination. The enchanted wood, on which the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is made in a great measure to depend; the messengers sent in quest of Rinaldo, in order that he may break the charm; their being conducted by a hermit to a cave in the centre of the earth; the wonderful voyage which they make to the fortunate islands; and their recovering Rinaldo from the charms of Armida and voluptuousness; are scenes which, though very amusing, and described with the highest beauty of poetry, yet must be confessed to carry the marvellous to a degree of extravagance.

In general, that for which Tasso is most liable to censure, is a certain romantic vein, which runs through many of the adventures and incidents of his poem, The objects which he presents to us,

are always great; but sometimes, too remote from probability. He retains somewhat of the taste of his age, which was not reclaimed from an extravagant admiration of the stories of knight-errantry; stories, which the wild, but rich and agreeable imagination of Ariosto, had raised into fresh reputation. In apology, however, for Tasso, it may be said, that he is not more marvellous and romantic than either Homer or Virgil. All the difference is, that in the one we find the romance of paganism, in the other, that of chivalry.

WITH all the beauties of description, and of poetical style, Tasso remarkably abounds. Both his descriptions, and his style, are much diversified, and well-suited to each other. In describing magnificent objects, his style is firm and majestic; when he descends to gay and pleasing ones, such as Erminia's pastoral retreat in the seventh book, and the arts and beauty of Armida in the fourth book, it is soft and insinuating. Both those descriptions, which I have mentioned, are exquisite in their kind. His battles are animated, and very properly varied in the incidents; inferior however to Homer's, in point of spirit and fire.

IN his sentiments, Tasso is not so happy as in his descriptions. It is indeed rather by actions, characters, and descriptions, that he interests us, than by the sentimental part of the work. He is far inferior to Virgil in tenderness. When he

aims at being pathetic and sentimental in his speeches, he is apt to become artificial and strained.

WITH regard to points and conceits, with which he has often been reproached, the censure has been carried too far. Affectation is by no means the general character of Tasso's manner, which, upon the whole, is masculine, strong, and correct. On some occasions, indeed, especially, as I just now observed, when he seeks to be tender, he degenerates into forced and unnatural ideas; but these are far from being so frequent or common as has been supposed. Threescore or fourscore lines retrenched from the poem, would fully clear it, I am persuaded, of all such exceptionable passages.

WITH Boileau, Dacier, and the other French critics of the last age, the humour prevailed of decrying Tasso; and passed from them to some of the English writers. But one would be apt to imagine, they were not much acquainted with Tasso; or at least they must have read him under the influence of strong prejudices. For to me it appears clear, that the Jerusalem is, in rank and dignity, the third regular epic poem in the world; and comes next to the Iliad and Æneid. Tasso may be justly held inferior to Homer, in simplicity and in fire; to Virgil, in tenderness; to Milton, in daring sublimity of genius; but to no other he yields in any poetical talents; and for fertility of invention, variety of incidents, expression of cha-

racters, richness of description, and beauty of style, I know no poet, except the three just named, that can be compared to him.

ARIOSTO, the great rival of Tasso in Italian poetry, cannot with any propriety, be classed among the epic writers. The fundamental rule of epic composition is, to recount an heroic enterprise, and to form it into a regular story. Though there is a sort of unity and connection in the plan of Orlando Furioso, yet, instead of rendering this apparent to the reader, it seems to have been the author's intention to keep it out of view, by the desultory manner in which the poem is carried on, and the perpetual interruptions of the several stories before they are finished. Ariosto appears to have despised all regularity of plan, and to have chosen to give loose reins to a copious and rich, but extravagant fancy. At the same time, there is so much epic matter in the Orlando Furioso, that it would be improper to pass it by without some notice. It unites indeed all sorts of poetry; sometimes comic and satiric; sometimes light and licentious; at other times, highly heroic descriptive, and tender. Whatever strain the poet assumes, he excels in it. He is always master of his subject; seems to play himself with it; and leaves us sometimes at a loss to know whether he be serious or in jest. He is seldom dramatic: sometimes, but not often, sentimental; but in narration and description, perhaps no poet ever went

beyond him. He makes every scene which he describes, and every event which he relates, pass before our eyes; and in his selection of circumstances, is eminently picturesque. His style is much varied, always suited to the subject, and adorned with a remarkably smooth and melodious versification.

As the Italians make their boast of Tasso, so do the Portuguese of Camoens; who was nearly cotemporary with Tasso, but whose poem was published before the Jerusalem. The subject of it is the first discovery of the East Indies by Vasco de Gama; an enterprise splendid in its nature, and extremely interesting to the countrymen of Camoens, as it laid the foundation of their future wealth and consideration in Europe. The poem opens with Vasco and his fleet appearing on the ocean, between the island Madagascar, and the coast of Æthiopia. After various attempts to land on that coast, they are at last hospitably received in the kingdom of Melinda. Vasco, at the desire of the king, gives him an account of Europe, recites a poetical history of Portugal, and relates all the adventures of the voyage, which had preceded the opening of the poem. This recital takes up three cantos, or books. It is well imagined; contains a great many poetical beauties; and has no defect, except that Vasco makes an unseasonable display of learning to the African Prince, in frequent allusions to the Greek and Roman his-

tories. Vasco and his countrymen afterwards set forth to pursue their voyage. The storms and distresses which they encounter; their arrival at Calecut on the Malabar coast; their reception and adventures in that country, and at last their return homewards, fill up the rest of the poem.

THE whole work is conducted according to the epic plan. Both the subject and the incidents are magnificent; and, joined with some wildness and irregularity, there appear in the execution much poetic spirit, strong fancy, and bold description; as far as I can judge from translations, without any knowledge of the original. There is no attempt towards painting characters in the poem; Vasco is the hero, and the only personage indeed that makes any figure.

THE machinery of the Lusiad is perfectly extravagant, not only is it formed of a singular mixture of Christian ideas, and pagan mythology; but it is so conducted, that the pagan gods appear to be the true deities, and Christ and the blessed Virgin, to be subordinate agents. One great scope of the Portuguese expedition, our author informs us, is to propagate the Christian faith, and to extirpate Mahometanism. In this religious undertaking, the great protector of the Portuguese is Venus, and their great adversary is Bacchus, whose displeasure is excited by Vasco's attempting to rival his fame in the Indies. Coun-

cils of the gods are held, in which Jupiter is introduced as foretelling the downfal of Mahometanism, and the propagation of the Gospel. Vasco, in great distress from a storm, prays most seriously to God; implores the aid of Christ and the Virgin, and begs for such assistance as was given to the Israelites, when they were passing through the Red Sea, and to the Apostle Paul, when he was in hazard of shipwreck. In return to this prayer, Venus appears, who discerning the storm to be the work of Bacchus, complains to Jupiter, and procures the winds to be calmed. Such strange and preposterous machinery, shows how much authors have been misled by the absurd opinion, that there could be no epic poetry without the gods of Homer. Towards the end of the work, indeed, the author gives us an awkward salvo for his whole mythology; making the goddess Thetis inform Vasco, that she, and the rest of the heathen deities, are no more than names to describe the operations of Providence.

THERE is, however, some fine machinery, of a different kind in the Lusiad. The genius of the river Ganges, appearing to Emanuel King of Portugal, in a dream, inviting that Prince to discover his secret springs, and acquainting him that he was the destined monarch for whom the treasures of the East were reserved, is a happy idea. But the noblest conception of this sort, is in the Fifth Canto, where Vasco is recounting to the King of

Melinda, all the wonders which he met with in his navigation. He tells him, that when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which never before had been doubled by any navigator, there appeared to them on a sudden, a huge and monstrous phantom rising out of the sea, in the midst of tempests and thunders, with a head that reached the clouds, and a countenance that filled them with terror. This was the genius, or guardian, of that hitherto unknown ocean. It spoke to them with a voice like thunder; menacing them for invading those seas which he had so long possessed undisturbed; and for daring to explore those secrets of the deep which never had been revealed to the eye of mortals; required them to proceed no farther; if they should proceed, foretold all the successive calamities that were to befal them; and then, with a mighty noise, disappeared. This is one of the most solemn and striking pieces of machinery that ever was employed; and is sufficient to show that Camoens is a poet, though of an irregular yet of a bold and a lofty imagination.*

In reviewing the epic poets, it were unjust to make no mention of the amiable author of the

* I have made no mention of the Araucana, an epic poem, in Spanish, composed by Alonzo d'Ercilla, because I am unacquainted with the original language, and have not seen any translation of it. A full account of it is given by Mr. Hayley, in the Notes upon his Essay on Epic poetry.

Adventures of Telemachus. His work, though not composed in verse, is justly entitled to be held a poem. The measured poetical prose, in which it is written, is remarkably harmonious; and gives the style nearly as much elevation as the French language is capable of supporting, even in regular verse.

THE plan of the work is, in general, well contrived; and is deficient neither in epic grandeur, nor unity of object. The author has entered with much felicity into the spirit and ideas of the ancient poets, particularly into the ancient mythology, which retains more dignity, and makes a better figure in his hands, than in those of any other modern poet. His descriptions are rich and beautiful; especially of the softer and calmer scenes, for which the genius of Fenelon was best suited; such as the incidents of pastoral life, the pleasures of virtue, or a country flourishing in peace. There is an inimitable sweetness and tenderness in several of the pictures of this kind, which he has given.

THE best executed part of the work, is the first six books, in which Telemachus recounts his adventures to Calypso. The narration, throughout them is lively and interesting. Afterwards, especially in the last twelve books, it becomes more tedious and languid; and in the warlike adventures which are attempted, there is a great defect

of vigour. The chief objection against this work being classed with epic poems, arises from the minute details of virtuous policy, into which the author in some places enters; and from the discourses and instructions of Mentor, which recur upon us too often; and too much in the strain of common-place morality. Though these were well suited to the main design of the author, which was to form the mind of a young prince, yet they seem not congruous to the nature of epic poetry; the object of which is to improve us by means of actions, characters, and sentiments, rather than by delivering professed and formal instruction.

SEVERAL of the epic poets have described a descent into hell; and in the prospects they have given us of the invisible world, we may observe the gradual refinement of men's notions concerning a state of future rewards and punishments. The descent of Ulysses into hell, in Homer's Odyssey, presents to us a very indistinct and dreary sort of object. The scene is laid in the country of the Cimmerians, which is always covered with clouds and darkness, at the extremity of the ocean. When the spirits of the dead begin to appear, we scarcely know whether Ulysses is above ground, or below it. None of the ghosts, even of the heroes, appear satisfied with their condition in the other world; and when Ulysses endeavours to comfort Achilles, by reminding him of the illustrious figure which he must make in those regions, Achilles

roundly tells him, that all such speeches are idle; for he would rather be a day-labourer on earth, than have the command of all the dead.

IN the sixth book of the Æneid, we discern a much greater refinement of ideas, corresponding to the progress which the world had then made in philosophy. The objects there delineated, are both more clear and distinct, and more grand and awful. The separate mansions of good and of bad spirits, with the punishments of the one, and the employments and happiness of the other, are finely described; and in consistency with the most pure morality. But the visit which Fenelon makes Telemachus pay to the shades, is much more philosophical still than Virgil's. He employs the same fables and the same mythology; but we find the ancient mythology refined by the knowledge of the true religion, and adorned with that beautiful enthusiasm, for which Fenelon was so distinguished. His account of the happiness of the just is an excellent description in the mystic strain; and very expressive of the genius and spirit of the author.

VOLTAIRE has given us, in his Henriade, a regular epic poem, in French verse. In every performance of that celebrated writer, we may expect to find marks of genius; and, accordingly, that work discovers, in several places, that boldness in the conceptions, and that liveliness and felicity in

the expression, for which the author is so remarkably distinguished. Several of the comparisons, in particular, which occur in it, are both new and happy. But considered upon the whole, I cannot esteem it one of his chief productions; and am of opinion, that he has succeeded infinitely better in tragic, than in epic composition. French versification seems ill adapted to epic poetry. Besides its being always fettered by rhyme, the language never assumes a sufficient degree of elevation or majesty; and appears to be more capable of expressing the tender in tragedy, than of supporting the sublime in epic. Hence a feebleness, and sometimes a prosaic flatness, in the style of the Henriade; and whether from this, or from some other cause, the poem often languishes. It does not seize the imagination; nor interest and carry the reader along, with that ardour which ought to be inspired by a sublime and spirited epic poem.

THE subject of the Henriade, is the triumph of Henry the Fourth over the arms of the League. The action of the poem, properly includes only the siege of Paris. It is an action perfectly epic in its nature; great, interesting, and conducted with a sufficient regard to unity, and all the other critical rules. But it is liable to both the defects which I before remarked in Lucan's Pharsalia. It is founded wholly on civil wars, and presents to us those odious and detestable objects of massacres and assassinations, which throw a gloom over the

poem It is also, like Lucan's, of too recent a date, and comes too much within the bounds of well-known history. To remedy this last defect, and to remove the appearance of being a mere historian, Voltaire has chosen to mix fiction with truth. The poem, for instance, opens with a voyage of Henry's to England, and an interview between him and Queen Elizabeth; though every one knows that Henry never was in England, and that these two illustrious personages never met. In facts of such public notoriety, a fiction like this shocks the reader, and forms an unnatural and ill-sorted mixture with historical truth. The episode was contrived, in order to give Henry an opportunity of recounting the former transactions of the civil wars, in imitation of the recital which Æneas makes to Dido in the Æneid. But the imitation was injudicious. Æneas might, with propriety, relate to Dido, transactions of which she was either entirely ignorant, or had acquired only an imperfect knowledge by flying reports. But Queen Elizabeth could not but be supposed to be perfectly apprised of all the facts which the poet makes Henry recite to her.

IN order to embellish his subject, Voltaire has chosen to employ a great deal of machinery. But here, also, I am obliged to censure his conduct; for the machinery, which he chiefly employs, is of the worst kind, and the least suited to an epic poem, that of allegorical beings. Discord, cun-

ning, and love, appear as personages, mix with the human actors, and make a considerable figure in the intrigue of the poem. This is contrary to every rule of rational criticism. Ghosts, angels, and devils have popular belief on their side, and may be conceived as existing. But every one knows, that allegorical beings are no more than representations of human dispositions and passions. They may be employed like other personifications and figures of speech; or in a poem, that is wholly allegorical, they may occupy the chief place. They are there in their native and proper region; but in a poem which relates to human transactions, as I had occasion before to remark, when such beings are described as acting along with men, the imagination is confounded; it is divided between phantasms and realities, and knows not on what to rest.

In justice, however to our author, I must observe, that the machinery of St. Louis, which he also employs, is of a better kind, and possesses real dignity. The finest passage in the Henriade, indeed one of the finest that occurs in any poem, is the prospect of the invisible world, which St. Louis gives to Henry in a dream, in the seventh canto. Death bringing the souls of the departed in succession before God; their astonishment when, arriving from all different countries and religious sects, they are brought into the Divine presence; when they find their superstitions to be false, and

have the truth unveiled to them; the palace of the destinies opened to Henry, and the prospect of his successors which is there given him; are striking and magnificent objects, and do honour to the genius of Voltaire.

THOUGH some of the episodes in this poem are properly extended, yet the narration is, on the whole, too general; the events are too much crowded, and superficially related; which is, doubtless one cause of the poem making a faint impression. The strain of sentiment which runs through it, is high and noble. Religion appears, on every occasion, with great and proper lustre; and the author breathes that spirit of humanity and toleration, which is conspicuous in all his works.

MILTON, of whom it remains now to speak, has chalked out for himself a new, and very extraordinary road in poetry. As soon as we open his Paradise Lost, we find ourselves introduced all at once into an invisible world, and surrounded with celestial and infernal beings. Angels and devils are not the machinery, but principal actors, in the poem; and what, in any other composition, would be the marvellous, is here only the natural course of events. A subject so remote from the affairs of this world, may furnish ground to those who think such discussions material, to bring it into doubt, whether Paradise Lost can properly be classed

among epic poems. By whatever name it is to be called, it is, undoubtedly, one of the highest efforts of poetical genius; and in one great characteristic of the epic poem, majesty and sublimity, it is fully equal to any that bear that name.

How far the author was altogether happy in the choice of his subject, may be questioned. It has led him into very difficult ground. Had he taken a subject that was more human, and less theological; that was more connected with the occurrences of life, and afforded a greater display of the characters and passions of men, his poem would perhaps have, to the bulk of readers, been more pleasing and attractive. But the subject which he has chosen, suited the daring sublimity of his genius.* It is a subject for which Milton alone was fitted; and in the conduct of it, he has shown a stretch both of imagination and invention, which is perfectly wonderful. It is astonishing how, from the few hints given us in the sacred Scriptures, he was able to raise so complete and

---

* "He seems to have been well acquainted with his own "genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed "upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of "displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the "awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful. "He therefore chose a subject, on which too much could not be "said; on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of "extravagance." Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton.

regular a structure; and to fill his poem with such a variety of incidents. Dry and harsh passages sometimes occur. The author appears, upon some occasions, a metaphysician and a divine, rather than a poet. But the general tenor of his work is interesting; he seizes and fixes the imagination; engages, elevates and affects us as we proceed, which is always a sure test of merit in an epic composition. The artful change of his objects; the scene laid now in earth, now in hell, and now in heaven, affords a sufficient diversity; while unity of plan is, at the same time perfectly supported. We have still life, and calm scenes, in the employments of Adam and Eve in paradise; and we have busy scenes, and great actions, in the enterprise of Satan, and the wars of the angels. The innocence, purity, and amiableness of our first parents, opposed to the pride and ambition of Satan, furnishes a happy contrast, that reigns throughout the whole poem; only the conclusion, as I before observed, is too tragic for epic poetry.

THE nature of the subject did not admit any great display of characters; but such as could be introduced, are supported with much propriety. Satan, in particular, makes a striking figure, and is, indeed, the best drawn character in the poem. Milton has not described him, such as we suppose an infernal spirit to be. He has, more suitably to his own purpose, given him a human, that is, a mixed character, not altogether void of some

good qualities. He is brave and faithful to his troops. In the midst of his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents; and justifies himself in his design against them, from the necessity of his situation. He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice. In short, Milton's Satan is no worse than many a conspirator or factious chief, that makes a figure in history. The different characters of Beelzebub, and Moloch, Belial, are exceedingly well painted in those eloquent speeches which they make in the second book. The good angels, though always described with dignity and propriety, have more uniformity than the infernal spirits in their appearance; though among them, too, the dignity of Michael, the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel, form proper characteristical distinctions. The attempt to describe God Almighty himself, and to recount dialogues between the Father and the Son, was too bold and arduous, and is that wherein our poet, as was to have been expected, has been most unsuccessful. With regard to his human characters; the innocence of our first parents, and their love, are finely and delicately painted. In some of his speeches to Raphael, and to Eve, Adam is, perhaps, too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is more distinctly characterised. Her gentleness, modesty, and frailty, mark very expressively a female character.

MILTON'S great and distinguishing excellence is, his sublimity. In this, perhaps, he excels Homer; as there is no doubt of his leaving Virgil, and every other poet, far behind him. Almost the whole of the first and second books of Paradise Lost are continued instances of the sublime. The prospect of hell and of the fallen host, the appearance and behaviour of Satan, the consultation of the infernal chiefs, and Satan's flight through chaos to the borders of this world, discover the most lofty ideas that ever entered into the conception of any poet. In the sixth book, also, there is much grandeur, particularly in the appearance of the Messiah; though some parts of that book are censurable; and the witticisms of the devils upon the effect of their artillery, form an intolerable blemish. Milton's sublimity is of a different kind from that of Homer. Homer's is generally accompanied with fire and impetuosity; Milton's possesses more of a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms and hurries us along; Milton fixes us in a state of astonishment and elevation. Homer's sublimity appears most in the description of actions; Milton's, in that of wonderful and stupendous objects.

BUT though Milton is most distinguished for his sublimity, yet there is also much of the beautiful, the tender, and the pleasing, in many parts of his work. When the scene is laid in Paradise, the imagery is always of the most gay and smiling

kind. His descriptions show an uncommonly fertile imagination; and in his similies, he is, for the most part, remarkably happy. They are seldom improperly introduced; seldom either low or trite. They generally present to us images taken from the sublime or the beautiful class of objects; if they have any faults, it is their alluding too frequently to matters of learning and to fables of antiquity. In the latter part of Paradise Lost, there must be confessed to be a falling off. With the fall of our first parents, Milton's genius seems to decline. Beauties, however, there are, in the concluding books of the tragic kind. The remorse and contrition of the guilty pair, and their lamentations over Paradise, when they are obliged to leave it, are very moving. The last episode of the angels showing Adam the fate of his posterity, is happily imagined; but, in many places, the execution is languid.

MILTON'S language and versification have high merit. His style is full of majesty, and wonderfully adapted to his subject. His blank verse is harmonious and diversified, and affords the most complete example of the elevation, which our language is capable of attaining by the force of numbers. It does not flow, like the French verse, in tame, regular, uniform melody, which soon tires the ear; but is sometimes smooth and flowing, sometimes rough; varied in its cadence, and intermixed with discords, so as to suit the strength and

freedom of epic composition. Neglected and prosaic lines, indeed, we sometimes meet with; but, in a work so long, and in the main so harmonious, these may be forgiven.

ON the whole, Paradise Lost is a poem that abounds with beauties of every kind, and that justly entitles its author to a degree of fame not inferior to any poet; though it must be also admitted to have many inequalities. It is the lot of almost every high and daring genius, not to be uniform and correct. Milton is too frequently theological and metaphysical; sometimes harsh in his language; often too technical in his words, and affectedly ostentatious of his learning. Many of his faults must be attributed to the pedantry of the age in which he lived. He discovers a vigour, a grasp of genius, equal to every thing that is great; if at sometimes he falls much below himself, at other times he rises above every poet, of the ancient or modern world.

LECTURE XLV.

DRAMATIC POETRY—TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIC Poetry has, among all civilized nations, been considered as a rational and useful entertainment, and judged worthy of careful and serious discussion. According as it is employed upon the light and the gay, or upon the grave and affecting incidents of human life, it divides itself into the two forms, of comedy or tragedy. But as great and serious objects command more attention than little and ludicrous ones; as the fall of a hero interests the public more than the marriage of a private person; tragedy has been always held a more dignified entertainment than comedy. The one rests upon the high passions, the virtues, crimes, and sufferings of mankind; the other on their humours, follies, and pleasures. Terror and pity are the great instruments of the former; ridicule is the sole instrument of the latter. Tragedy shall therefore be the object of our fullest discussion. This and the following Lecture shall be employed on it; after which I shall treat of what is peculiar to comedy.

TRAGEDY, considered as an exhibition of the characters and behaviour of men in some of the most trying and critical situations of life, is a noble idea of poetry. It is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. For it does not, like the epic poem, exhibit characters by the narration and description of the poet; but the poet disappears; and the personages themselves are set before us, acting and speaking what is suitable to their characters. Hence, no kind of writing is so great a trial of the author's profound knowledge of the human heart. No kind of writing has so much power, when happily executed, to raise the strongest emotions. It is, or ought to be, a mirror in which we behold ourselves, and the evils to which we are exposed; a faithful copy of the human passions, with all their direful effects, when they are suffered to become extravagant.

AS tragedy is a high and distinguished species of composition, so also, in its general strain and spirit, it is favourable to virtue. Such power hath virtue happily over the human mind, by the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, that as admiration cannot be raised in epic poetry, so neither in tragic poetry can our passions be strongly moved, unless virtuous emotions be awakened within us. Every poet finds, that it is impossible to interest us in any character, without representing that character as worthy and honourable, though it may not be perfect; and that the great

secret for raising indignation is, to paint the person who is to be the object of it, in the colours of vice and depravity. He may, indeed, nay, he must, represent the virtuous as sometimes unfortunate, because this is often the case in real life; but he will always study to engage our hearts in their behalf; and though they may be described as unprosperous, yet there is no instance of a tragic poet representing vice as fully triumphant and happy, in the catastrophe of the piece. Even when bad men succeed in their designs, punishment is made always to attend them; and misery of one kind or other, is shewn to be unavoidably connected with guilt. Love and admiration of virtuous characters, compassion for the injured and the distressed, and indignation against the authors of their sufferings, are the sentiments most generally excited by tragedy. And, therefore, though dramatic writers may sometimes, like other writers, be guilty of improprieties, though they may fail of placing virtue precisely in the due point of light, yet no reasonable person can deny tragedy to be a moral species of composition. Taking tragedies complexly, I am fully persuaded, that the impressions left by them upon the mind, are, on the whole, favourable to virtue and good dispositions. And, therefore, the zeal which some pious men have shown against the entertainments of the theatre must rest only upon the abuse of comedy; which, indeed, has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it.

THE account which Aristotle gives of the design of tragedy is, that it is intended to purge our passions by means of pity and terror. This is somewhat obscure. Various senses have been put upon his words, and much altercation has followed among his commentators. Without entering into any controversy upon this head, the intention of tragedy may, I think, be more shortly and clearly defined, to improve our virtuous sensibility. If an author interests us in behalf of virtue, forms us to compassion for the distressed, inspires us with proper sentiments, on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and, by means of the concern which he raises for the misfortunes of others, leads us to guard against errors in our own conduct, he accomplishes all the moral purposes of tragedy.

IN order to this end, the first requisite is, that he choose some moving and interesting story, and that he conduct it in a natural and probable manner. For, we must observe, that the natural and the probable must always be the basis of tragedy; and are infinitely more important there, than in epic poetry. The object of the epic poet is to excite our admiration by the recital of heroic adventures; and a much slighter degree of probability is required when admiration is concerned, than when the tender passions are intended to be moved. The imagination, in the former case, is exalted, accommodates itself to the poet's idea, and can admit the marvellous without being shocked. But

tragedy demands a stricter imitation of the life and actions of men. For the end which it pursues is, not so much to elevate the imagination, as to affect the heart; and the heart always judges more nicely than the imagination, of what is probable. Passion can be raised, only by making the impressions of nature, and of truth, upon the mind. By introducing, therefore, any wild or romantic circumstances into his story, the poet never fails to check passion in its growth, and, of course, disappoints the main effect of tragedy.

THIS principle, which is founded on the clearest reason, excludes from tragedy all machinery, or fabulous intervention of the gods. Ghosts have, indeed, maintained their place; as being strongly founded on popular belief, and peculiarly suited to heighten the terror of tragic scenes. But all unravellings of the plot, which turn upon the interposition of deities, such as Euripides employs in several of his plays, are much to be condemned; both as clumsy and inartificial, and as destroying the probability of the story. This mixture of machinery, with the tragic action, is undoubtedly a blemish in the ancient theatre.

IN order to promote that impression of probability which is so necessary to the success of tragedy, some critics have required, that the subject should never be a pure fiction invented by the poet, but built on real history, or known facts.

Such, indeed, were generally, if not always, the subjects of the Greek Tragedians. But I cannot hold this to be a matter of any great consequence. It is proved by experience, that a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as any real history. In order to our being moved, it is not necessary, that the events related did actually happen, provided they be such as might easily have happened in the ordinary course of nature. Even when tragedy borrows its materials from history, it mixes many a fictitious circumstance. The greatest part of readers neither know, nor enquire, what is fabulous, or what is historical, in the subject. They attend only to what is probable, and are touched by events which resemble nature. Accordingly, some of the most pathetic tragedies are entirely fictitious in the subject; such as Voltaire's Zaire and Alzire, the Orphan, Douglas, the Fair Penitent, and several others.

WHETHER the subject be of the real or feigned kind, that on which most depends for rendering the incidents in a tragedy probable, and by means of their probability affecting, is the conduct or management of the story, and the connection of its several parts. To regulate this conduct, critics have laid down the famous rule of the three unities; the importance of which it will be necessary to discuss. But, in order to do this with more advantage, it will be necessary, that we first look backwards, and trace the rise and origin of tra-

gedy, which will give light to several things relating to the subject.

TRAGEDY, like other arts, was, in its beginning, rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks, from whom our dramatic entertainments are derived, the origin of tragedy was no other than the song which was wont to be sung at the festival of Bacchus. A goat was the sacrifice offered to that god; after the sacrifice, the priests, with the company that joined them, sung hymns in honour of Bacchus; and from the name of the victim, τραγος a goat, joined with ωδη a song, undoubtedly arose the word tragedy.

THESE hymns, or lyric poems, were sung sometimes by the whole company, sometimes by separate bands, answering alternately to each other; making what we call a chorus, with its strophes and antistrophes. In order to throw some variety into this entertainment, and to relieve the singers, it was thought proper to introduce a person, who between the songs, should make a recitation in verse. Thespis, who lived about 536 years before the Christian æra, made this innovation; and, as it was relished, Æschylus, who came 50 years after him, and who is properly the father of tragedy, went a step farther, introduced a dialogue between two persons, or actors, in which he contrived to interweave some interesting story, and brought his actors on a stage, adorned with proper scenery

and decorations. All that these actors recited, was called episode, or additional song; and the songs of the chorus were made to relate no longer to Bacchus, their original subject, but to the story in which the actors were concerned. This began to give the drama a regular form, which was soon after brought to perfection by Sophocles and Euripides. It is remarkable, in how short a space of time tragedy grew up among the Greeks, from the rudest beginnings to its most perfect state. For Sophocles, the greatest and most correct of all the tragic poets, flourished only 22 years after Æschylus, and was little more than 70 years posterior to Thespis.

FROM the account which I have now given, it appears that the chorus was the basis or foundation of the ancient tragedy. It was not an ornament added to it; or a contrivance designed to render it more perfect; but, in truth, the dramatic dialogue was an addition to the chorus, which was the original entertainment. In process of time, the chorus, from being the principal, became only the accessory in tragedy; till at last, in modern tragedy, it has disappeared altogether; which forms the chief distinction between the ancient and the modern stage.

THIS has given rise to a question, much agitated between the partizans of the ancients and the moderns, whether the drama has gained, or has suffered, by the abolition of the chorus? It must

be admitted, that the chorus tended to render tragedy both more magnificent and more instructive and moral. It was alway the most sublime and poetical part of the work; and being carried on by singing, and accompanied with music, it must, no doubt, have diversified the entertainment greatly, and added to its splendour. The chorus, at the same time, conveyed constant lessons of virtue. It was composed of such persons as might most naturally be supposed present on the occasion; inhabitants of the place where the scene was laid, often the companions of some of the principal actors, and therefore, in some degree, interested in the issue of the action. This company, which in the days of Sophocles, was restricted to the number of fifteen persons, was constantly on the stage, during the whole performance, mingled in discourse with the actors, entered into their concerns, suggested counsel and advice to them, moralised on all the incidents that were going on, and during the intervals of the action, sung their odes, or songs, in which they addressed the gods, prayed for success to the virtuous, lamented their misfortunes, and delivered many religious and moral sentiments.*

---

* The office of the chorus is thus described by Horace:

Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat; neu quid medios intercinat actus,
Quod non proposito conducat, et hæreat aptè.
Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis,
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes:

BUT, notwithstanding the advantages which were obtained by means of the chorus, the inconveniences on the other side are so great, as to render the modern practice of excluding the chorus, far more eligible upon the whole. For if a natural and probable imitation of human actions be the chief end of the drama, no other persons ought to be brought on the stage, than those who are necessary to the dramatic action. The introduction of an adventitious company of persons, who have but a slight concern in the business of the play, is unnatural in itself, embarrassing to the poet, and, though it may render the spectacle splendid, tends, undoubtedly, to render it more cold and uninteresting, because more unlike a real transaction.

Ille dapes laudet mensæ brevis; ille salubrem
Justitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis.
Ille tegat commissa; deosque precetur, et oret
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.

DE ARTE POET. 193.

The chorus must support an actor's part,
Defend the virtuous, and advise with art;
Govern the choleric, and the proud appease,
And the short feasts of frugal tables praise;
Applaud the justice of well-govern'd states,
And peace triumphant with her open gates.
Intrusted secrets let them ne'er betray,
But to the righteous gods with ardour pray,
That fortune, with returning smiles, may bless
Afflicted worth, and impious pride depress;
Yet let their songs with apt coherence join,
Promote the plot, and aid the just design. FRANCIS.

The mixture of music, or song, on the part of the chorus, with the dialogue carried on by the actors, is another unnatural circumstance, removing the representation still farther from the resemblance of life. The poet, besides, is subjected to innumerable difficulties in so contriving his plan, that the presence of the chorus, during all the incidents of the play, shall consist with any probability. The scene must be constantly, and often absurdly, laid in some public place, that the chorus may be supposed to have free access to it. To many things that ought to be transacted in private, the chorus must ever be witnesses; they must be the confederates of both parties, who come successively upon the stage, and who are, perhaps, conspiring against each other. In short, the management of a chorus is an unnatural confinement to a poet; it requires too great a sacrifice of probability in the conduct of the action; it has too much the air of a theatrical decoration, to be consistent with that appearance of reality, which a poet must ever preserve in order to move our passions. The origin of tragedy, among the Greeks, we have seen, was a choral song, or hymn to the gods. There is no wonder, therefore, that on the Greek stage it so long maintained possession. But it may confidently, I think, be asserted, that if, instead of the dramatic dialogue having been superadded to the chorus, the dialogue itself had been the first invention, the chorus would, in that case, never have been thought of.

ONE use, I am of opinion, might still be made of the ancient chorus, and would be a considerable improvement of the modern theatre; if, instead of that unmeaning, and often improperly chosen music, with which the audience is entertained in the intervals between the acts, a chorus were then to be introduced, whose music and songs, though forming no part of the play, should have a relation to the incidents of the preceding act, and to the dispositions which those incidents are presumed to have awakened in the spectators. By this means, the tone of passion would be kept up without interruption; and all the good effects of the ancient chorus might be preserved, for inspiring proper sentiments, and for increasing the morality of the performance, without those inconveniences which arose from the chorus forming a constituent part of the play, and mingling unseasonably, and unnaturally, with the personages of the drama.

AFTER the view which we have taken of the rise of tragedy, and of the nature of the ancient chorus, with the advantages and inconveniences attending it, our way is cleared for examining, with more advantage, the three unities of action, place, and time which have generally been considered as essential to the proper conduct of the dramatic fable.

OF these three, the first, unity of action, is, beyond doubt, far the most important. In treat-

ing of epic poetry, I have already explained the nature of it; as consisting in a relation which all the incidents introduced bear to some design or effect, so as to combine naturally into one whole. This unity of subject is still more essential to tragedy, than it is to epic poetry. For a multiplicity of plots or actions, crowded into so short a space as tragedy allows, must, of necessity, distract the attention, and prevent passion from rising to any height. Nothing, therefore, is worse conduct in a tragic poet, than to carry on two independent actions in the same play; the effect of which is, that the mind being suspended and divided between them, cannot give itself up entirely either to the one or the other. There may, indeed, be underplots; that is, the persons introduced, may have different pursuits and designs; but the poet's art must be shewn in managing these, so as to render them subservient to the main action. They ought to be connected with the catastrophe of the play, and to conspire in bringing it forward. If there be any intrigue which stands separate and independent, and which may be left out without affecting the unravelling of the plot, we may always conclude this to be a faulty violation of unity. Such episodes are not permitted here, as in epic poetry.

We have a clear example of this defect in Mr. Addison's Cato. The subject of this tragedy is, the death of Cato; and a very noble personage

Cato is, and supported by the author with much dignity. But all the love scenes in the play; the passion of Cato's two sons for Lucia, and that of Juba for Cato's daughter, are mere episodes; have no connection with the principal action, and no effect upon it. The author thought his subject too barren in incidents, and in order to diversify it, he has given us, as it were, by the bye, a history of the amours that were going on in Cato's family; by which he hath both broken the unity of his subject, and formed a very unseasonable junction of gallantry, with the high sentiments, and public-spirited passions which predominate in other parts, and which the play was chiefly designed to display.

WE must take care not to confound the unity of the action with the simplicity of the plot. Unity, and simplicity, import different things in dramatic composition. The plot is said to be simple, when a small number of incidents are introduced into it. But it may be implex, as the critics term it, that is, it may include a considerable number of persons and events, and yet not be deficient in unity; provided all the incidents be made to tend towards the principal object of the play, and be properly connected with it. All the Greek tragedies not only maintain unity in the action, but are remarkably simple in the plot; to such a degree, indeed, as sometimes to appear to us too naked, and destitute of interesting events.

In the Œdipus Coloneus, for instance, of Sophocles, the whole subject is no more than this: Œdipus, blind and miserable, wanders to Athens, and wishes to die there; Creon and his son Polynices, arrive at the same time, and endeavour, separately, to persuade the old man to return to Thebes, each with a view to his own interest; he will not go; Theseus, the King of Athens, protects him; and the play ends with his death. In the Philoctetes of the same author, the plot, or fable, is nothing more than Ulysses, and the son of Achilles, studying to persuade the diseased Philoctetes to leave his uninhabited island, and go with them to Troy; which he refuses to do, till Hercules, whose arrows he possessed, descends from heaven and commands him. Yet these simple, and seemingly barren subjects are wrought up with so much art by Sophocles, as to become very tender and affecting.

AMONG the moderns, much greater variety of events has been admitted into tragedy. It has become more the theatre of passion than it was among the ancients. A greater display of characters is attempted; more intrigue and action are carried on; our curiosity is more awakened, and more interesting situations arise. This variety is, upon the whole, an improvement on tragedy; it renders the entertainment both more animated and more instructive; and when kept within due bounds, may be perfectly consistent with

unity of subject. But the poet must, at the same time, beware of not deviating too far from simplicity in the construction of his fable. For if he over-charges it with action and intrigue, it becomes perplexed and embarrassed; and, by consequence, loses much of its effect. Congreve's "Mourning Bride," a tragedy otherwise far from being void of merit, fails in this respect; and may be given as an instance of one standing in perfect opposition to the simplicity of the ancient plots. The incidents succeed one another too rapidly. The play is too full of business. It is difficult for the mind to follow and comprehend the whole series of events; and, what is the greatest fault of all, the catastrophe, which ought always to be plain and simple, is brought about in a manner too artificial and intricate.

UNITY of action must not only be studied in the general construction of the fable, or plot, but must regulate the several acts and scenes, into which the play is divided.

THE division of every play, into five acts, has no other foundation than common practice, and the authority of Horace:

Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
Fabula.——— DE ARTE POET.

---

* If you would have your play deserve success,
Give it five acts complete, nor more, nor less. FRANCIS.

It is a division purely arbitrary. There is nothing in the nature of the composition which fixes this number rather than any other; and it had been much better if no such number had been ascertained, but every play had been allowed to divide itself into as many parts, or intervals, as the subject naturally pointed out. On the Greek stage, whatever may have been the case on the Roman, the division by acts was totally unknown. The word, act, never once occurs in Aristotle's Poetics, in which he defines exactly every part of the drama, and divides it into the beginning, the middle, and the end; or, in his own words, into the prologue, the episode, and the exode. The Greek Tragedy was, indeed, one continued representation, from beginning to end. The stage was never empty, nor the curtain let fall. But, at certain intervals, when the actors retired, the chorus continued and sung. Neither do these songs of the chorus divide the Greek tragedies into five portions, similar to our acts; though some of the commentators have endeavoured to force them into this office. But it is plain, that the intervals at which the chorus sung, are extremely unequal and irregular, suited to the occasion and the subject; and would divide the play sometimes into three, sometimes into seven or eight acts.*

As practice has now established a different plan

* See the dissertation prefixed to Franklin's translation of Sophocles.

on the modern stage, has divided every play into five acts, and made a total pause in the representation at the end of each act, the poet must be careful that this pause shall fall in a proper place; where there is a natural pause in the action, and where, if the imagination has any thing to supply, that is not represented on the stage, it may be supposed to have been transacted during the interval.

THE first act ought to contain a clear exposition of the subject. It ought to be so managed as to awaken the curiosity of the spectators; and at the same time to furnish them with materials for understanding the sequel. It should make them acquainted with the personages who are to appear, with their several views and interests, and with the situation of affairs at the time when the play commences. A striking introduction, such as the first speech of Almeria, in the Mourning Bride, and that of Lady Randolph, in Douglas, produces a happy effect: but this is what the subject will not always admit. In the ruder times of dramatic writing, the exposition of the subject was wont to be made by a prologue, or by a single actor appearing, and giving full and direct information to the spectators. Some of Æschylus's and Euripides's plays are opened in this manner. But such an introduction is extremely inartificial, and therefore is now totally abolished, and the subject made

to open itself by conversation, among the first actors who are brought upon the stage.

DURING the course of the drama, in the second, third, and fourth acts, the plot should gradually thicken. The great object which the poet ought here to have in view, is, by interesting us in his story, to keep our passions always awake. As soon as he allows us to languish, there is no more tragic merit. He should, therefore, introduce no personages but such as are necessary for carrying on the action. He should contrive to place those whom he finds it proper to introduce, in the most interesting situations. He should have no scenes of idle conversation or mere declamation. The action of the play ought to be always advancing, and as it advances, the suspense, and the concern of the spectators, to be raised more and more. This is the great excellency of Shakespeare, that his scenes are full of sentiment and action, never of mere discourse; whereas, it is often a fault of the best French tragedians, that they allow the action to languish for the sake of a long and artful dialogue. Sentiment, passion, pity, and terror, should reign throughout a tragedy. Every thing should be full of movements. An useless incident, or an unnecessary conversation, weakens the interest which we take in the action, and renders us cold and inattentive.

THE fifth act is the seat of the catastrophe,

or the unravelling of the plot, in which we always expect the art and genius of the poet to be most fully displayed. The first rule concerning it, is, that it be brought about by probable and natural means. Hence all unravellings which turn upon disguised habits, rencounters by night, mistakes of one person for another, and other such theatrical and romantic circumstances, are to be condemned as faulty. In the next place, the catastrophe ought always to be simple; to depend on few events, and to include but few persons. Passion never rises so high when it is divided among many objects, as when it is directed towards one or a few. And it is still more checked, if the incidents be so complex and intricate, that the understanding is put on the stretch to trace them, when the heart should be wholly delivered up to emotion. The catastrophe of the Mourning Bride, as I formerly hinted, offends against both these rules. In the last place, the catastrophe of a tragedy ought to be the reign of pure sentiment and passion. In proportion as it approaches, every thing should warm and glow. No long discourses: nor cold reasonings; no parade of genius, in the midst of those solemn and awful events, that close some of the great revolutions of human fortune. There, if any where, the poet must be simple, serious, pathetic; and speak no language but that of nature.

THE ancients were fond of unravellings, which

turned upon what is called, an "Anagnorisis," or a discovery of some person to be different from what he was taken to be. When such discoveries are artfully conducted, and produced in critical situations, they are extremly striking; such as that famous one in Sophocles, which makes the whole subject of his Œdipus Tyrannus, and which is, undoubtedly, the fullest of suspense, agitation, and terror, that ever was exhibited on any stage. Among the moderns, two of the most distinguished anagnorises, are those contained in Voltaire's Merope, and Mr. Home's Douglas: both of which are great master-pieces of the kind.

IT is not essential to the catastrophe of a tragedy, that it should end unhappily. In the course of the play there may be sufficient agitation and distress, and many tender emotions raised by the sufferings and dangers of the virtuous, though, in the end, good men are rendered successful. The tragic spirit, therefore, does not want scope upon this system; and accordingly, the Athalie of Racine, and some of Voltaire's finest plays, such as Alzire, Merope, and the Orphan of China, with some few English tragedies, likewise, have a fortunate conclusion. But, in general, the spirit of tragedy, especially of English tragedy, leans more to the side of leaving the impression of virtuous sorrow full and strong upon the heart.

A QUESTION, intimately connected with this

subject, and which has employed the speculations of several philosophical critics, naturally occurs here: How it comes to pass that those emotions of sorrow which tragedy excites, afford any gratification to the mind? For, is not sorrow, in its nature, a painful passion? Is not real distress often occasioned to the spectators, by the dramatic representations at which they assist? Do we not see their tears flow? and yet, while the impression of what they have suffered remains upon their minds, they again assemble in crowds, to renew the same distresses. The question is not without difficulty, and various solutions of it have been proposed by ingenious men.* The most plain and satisfactory account of the matter, appears to me to be the following. By the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, the exercise of all the social passions is attended with pleasure. Nothing is more pleasing and grateful, than love and friendship. Wherever man takes a strong interest in the concerns of his fellow-creatures, an internal satisfaction is made to accompany the feeling. Pity, or compassion, in particular, is, for wise ends, appointed to be one of the strongest instincts of our frame, and is attended with a peculiar attrac-

* See Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, Book I. ch. xi. where an account is given of the hypotheses of different critics on this subject; and where one is proposed, with which, in the main, I agree.—See also Lord Kaimes's Essays on the Principles of Morality, Essay I. And Mr. David Hume's Essay on Tragedy.

tive power. It is an affection which cannot but be productive of some distress, on account of the sympathy with the sufferers, which it necessarily involves. But, as it includes benevolence and friendship, it partakes, at the same time, of the agreeable and pleasing nature of those reflections. The heart is warmed by kindness and humanity, at the same time at which it is afflicted by the distresses of those with whom it sympathises: and the pleasure arising from those kind emotions, prevails so much in the mixture, and so far counterbalances the pain, as to render the state of the mind upon the whole, agreeable. At the same time, the immediate pleasure, which always goes along with the operation of the benevolent and sympathetic affections, derives an addition from the approbation of our own minds. We are pleased with ourselves, for feeling as we ought, and for entering, with proper sorrow, into the concerns of the afflicted. In tragedy, besides, other adventitious circumstances concur to diminish the painful part of sympathy, and to increase the satisfaction attending it. We are, in some measure, relieved, by thinking that the cause of our distress is feigned, not real; and we are also gratified by the charms of poetry, the propriety of sentiment and language, and the beauty of action. From the concurrence of these causes, the pleasure which we receive from tragedy, notwithstanding the distress it occasions, seems to me to be accounted for in a satisfactory manner. At the

same time, it is to be observed, that, as there is always a mixture of pain in the pleasure, that pain is capable of being so much heightened by the representation of incidents extremely direful, as to shock our feelings, and to render us averse, either to the reading of such tragedies, or to the beholding of them upon the stage.

HAVING now spoken of the conduct of the subject throughout the acts, it is also necessary to take notice of the conduct of the several scenes which make up the acts of a play.

THE entrance of a new personage upon the stage, forms, what is called, a new scene. These scenes, or successive conversations, should be closely linked and connected with each other; and much of the art of dramatic composition is shown in maintaining this connection. Two rules are necessary to be observed for this purpose.

THE first is, that, during the course of one act, the stage should never be left vacant, though but for a single moment; that is, all the persons who have appeared in one scene, or conversation, should never go off together, and be succeeded by a new set of persons appearing in the next scene, independent of the former. This makes a gap, or total interruption in the representation, which, in effect, puts an end to that act. For, whenever the stage is evacuated, the act is closed. This

rule is very generally observed by the French tragedians; but the English writers, both of comedy and tragedy, seldom pay any regard to it. Their personages succeed one another upon the stage with so little connection; the union of their scenes is so much broken, that with equal propriety, their plays might be divided into ten or twelve acts, as into five.

THE second rule, which the English writers also observe little better than the former, is, that no person shall come upon the stage or leave it, without a reason appearing to us, both for the one and the other. Nothing is more awkward, and contrary to art, than for an actor to enter, without our seeing any cause for his appearing in that scene, except that it was for the poet's purpose he should enter precisely at such a moment; or for an actor to go away without any reason for his retiring; farther than that the poet had no more speeches to put into his mouth. This is managing the personæ dramatis exactly like so many puppets, who are moved by wires, to answer the call of the master of the show. Whereas the perfection of dramatic writing requires that every thing should be conducted in imitation, as near as possible, of some real transaction; where we are let into the secret of all that is passing; where we behold persons before us always busy; see them coming and going; and know perfectly whence

they come, and whither they go, and about what they are employed.

ALL that I have hitherto said, relates to the unity of the dramatic action. In order to render the unity of action more complete, critics have added the other two unities of time and place. The strict observance of these is more difficult, and, perhaps, not so necessary. The unity of place requires, that the scene should never be shifted; but that the action of the play should be continued to the end, in the same place where it is supposed to begin. The unity of time, strictly taken, requires, that the time of the action be no longer than the time that is allowed for the representation of the play; though Aristotle seems to have given the poet a little more liberty, and permitted the action to comprehend the whole time of one day.

THE intention of both these rules is, to overcharge, as little as possible, the imagination of the spectators with improbable circumstances in the acting of the play, and to bring the imitation more close to reality. We must observe, that the nature of dramatic exhibitions upon the Greek stage, subjected the ancient tragedians to a more strict observance of these unities than is necessary in modern theatres. I shewed, that a Greek tragedy was one uninterrupted representation, from beginning to end. There was no division of acts; no

pauses or interval between them; but the stage was continually full; occupied either by the actors, or the chorus. Hence, no room was left for the imagination to go beyond the precise time and place of the representation, any more than is allowed during the continuance of one act, on the modern theatre.

BUT the practice of suspending the spectacle totally for some little time between the acts, has made a great and material change; gives more latitude to the imagination, and renders the ancient strict confinement to time and place less necessary. While the acting of the play is interrupted, the spectator can, without any great or violent effort, suppose a few hours to pass between every act; or can suppose himself moved from one apartment of a palace, or one part of a city to another: and, therefore, too strict an observance of these unities ought not to be preferred to higher beauties of execution, nor to the introduction of more pathetic situations, which sometimes cannot be accomplished in any other way, than by the transgression of these rules.

ON the ancient stage, we plainly see the poets struggling with many an inconvenience, in order to preserve those unities which were then so necessary. As the scene could never be shifted, they were obliged to make it always lie in some court of a palace, or some public area, to which all the

persons concerned in the action might have equal access. This led to frequent improbabilities, by representing things as transacted there, which naturally ought to have been transacted before few witnesses, and in private apartments. The like improbabilities arose, from limiting themselves so much in point of time. Incidents were unnaturally crowded; and it is easy to point out several instances in the Greek tragedies, where events are supposed to pass during a song of the chorus, which must necessarily have employed many hours.

BUT though it seems necessary to set modern poets free from a strict observance of these dramatic unities, yet we must remember there are certain bounds to this liberty. Frequent and wild changes of time and place; hurrying the spectator from one distant city, or country, to another; or making several days or weeks to pass during the course of the representation, are liberties which shock the imagination, which give to the performance a romantic and unnatural appearance, and, therefore, cannot be allowed in any dramatic writer, who aspires to correctness. In particular, we must remember, that it is only between the acts, that any liberty can be given for going beyond the unities of time and place. During the course of each act, they ought to be strictly observed; that is, during each act the scene should continue the same, and no more time should be supposed to pass, than is employed in the repre-

sentation of that act. This is a rule which the French tragedians regularly observe. To violate this rule, as is too often done by the English; to change the place, and shift the scene, in the midst of one act, shews great incorrectness, and destroys the whole intention of the division of a play into acts. Mr. Addison's Cato is remarkable beyond most English tragedies, for regularity of conduct. The author has limited himself, in time, to a single day; and in place, has maintained the most rigorous unity. The scene is never changed; and the whole action passes in the hall of Cato's house at Utica.

In general, the nearer a poet can bring the dramatic representation, in all its circumstances, to an imitation of nature and real life, the impression which he makes on us will always be the more perfect. Probability, as I observed at the beginning of the Lecture, is highly essential to the conduct of the tragic action, and we are always hurt by the want of it. It is this that makes the observance of the dramatic unities to be of consequence, as far as they can be observed, without sacrificing more material beauties. It is not, as has been sometimes said, that by the preservation of the unities of time and place, spectators are deceived into a belief of the reality of the objects which are set before them on the stage; and that, when those unities are violated, the charm is broken, and they discover the whole to be a fiction.

No such deception as this can ever be accomplished. No one ever imagines himself to be at Athens, or Rome, when a Greek or Roman subject is presented on the stage. He knows the whole to be an imitation only; but he requires that imitation to be conducted with skill and verisimilitude. His pleasure, the entertainment which he expects, the interest which he is to take in the story, all depend on its being so conducted. His imagination, therefore, seeks to aid the imitation, and to rest on the probability; and the poet, who shocks him by improbable circumstances, and by awkward, unskilful imitation, deprives him of his pleasure, and leaves him hurt and displeased. This is the whole mystery of the theatrical illusion.

LECTURE XLVI.

TRAGEDY—GREEK—FRENCH—ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

HAVING treated of the dramatic action in tragedy, I proceed next to treat of the characters most proper to be exhibited. It has been thought, by several critics, that the nature of tragedy requires the principal personages to be always of illustrious character, and of high or princely rank; whose misfortunes and sufferings, it is said, take faster hold of the imagination, and impress the heart more forcibly than similar events happening to persons in private life. But this is more specious than solid. It is refuted by facts. For the distresses of Desdemona, Monimia, and Belvidera, interest us as deeply as if they had been princesses or queens. The dignity of tragedy does, indeed, require that there should be nothing degrading or mean, in the circumstances of the persons which it exhibits; but it requires nothing more. Their high rank may render the spectacle more splendid, and the subject seemingly of more importance, but conduces very little to its being interest-

ing or pathetic; which depends entirely on the nature of the tale, on the art of the poet in conducting it, and on the sentiments to which it gives occasion. In every rank of life, the relations of father, husband, son, brother, lover, or friend, lay the foundation of those affecting situations, which make man's heart feel for man.

THE moral characters of the persons represented, are of much greater consequence than the external circumstances in which the poet places them. Nothing, indeed, in the conduct of tragedy, demands a poet's attention more, than so to describe his personages, and so to order the incidents which relate to them, as shall leave upon the spectators, impressions favourable to virtue, and to the administration of Providence. It is not necessary, for this end, that poetical justice, as it is called, should be observed in the catastrophe of the piece. This has been long exploded from tragedy; the end of which is, to affect us with pity for the virtuous in distress, and to afford a probable representation of the state of human life, where calamities often befal the best, and a mixed portion of good and evil is appointed for all. But, withal, the author must beware of shocking our minds with such representations of life as tend to raise horror, or to render virtue an object of aversion. Though innocent persons suffer, their sufferings ought to be attended with such circumstances, as shall make virtue appear amiable and venerable; and shall

render their condition on the whole, preferable to that of bad men, who have prevailed against them. The stings, and the remorse of guilt, must ever be represented as productive of greater miseries than any that the bad can bring upon the good.

ARISTOTLE'S observations on the characters proper for tragedy, are very judicious. He is of opinion, that perfect unmixed characters, either of good or ill men are not the fittest to be introduced. The distresses of the one being wholly unmerited, hurt and shock us; and the sufferings of the other, occasion no pity. Mixed characters, such as in fact we meet with in the world, afford the most proper field for displaying, without any bad effect on morals, the vicissitudes of life; and they interest us the more deeply, as they display emotions and passions, which we have all been conscious of. When such persons fall into distress through the vices of others, the subject may be very pathetic; but it is always more instructive, when a person has been himself the cause of his misfortune, and when his misfortune is occasioned by the violence of passion, or by some weakness incident to human nature. Such subjects both dispose us to the deepest sympathy, and administer useful warnings to us for our own conduct.

UPON these principles, it surprises me that the story of Œdipus should have been so much celebrated by all the critics, as one of the fittest sub-

jects for tragedy; and so often brought upon the stage, not by Sophocles only, but by Corneille also, and Voltaire. An innocent person, one, in the main, of a virtuous character, through no crime of his own, nay, not by the vices of others, but through mere fatality and blind chance, is involved in the greatest of all human miseries. In a casual rencountre he kills his father, without knowing him; he afterwards is married to his own mother; and discovering himself in the end to have committed both parricide and incest, he becomes frantic, and dies in the utmost misery. Such a subject excites horror rather than pity. As it is conducted by Sophocles, it is indeed extremely affecting; but it conveys no instruction; it awakens in the mind no tender sympathy; it leaves no impression favourable to virtue or humanity.

IT must be acknowledged, that the subjects of the ancient Greek tragedies were too often founded on mere destiny and inevitable misfortunes. They were too much mixed with their tales about oracles, and the vengeance of the gods, which led to many an incident sufficiently melancholy and tragical; but rather purely tragical, than useful or moral. Hence, both the Œdipus's of Sophocles, the Iphigenia in Aulis, the Hecuba of Euripides, and several of the like kind. In the course of the drama, many moral sentiments occurred. But the instruction, which the fable of the play conveyed, seldom was any more, than that reverence

was owing to the gods, and submission due to the decrees of destiny. Modern tragedy has aimed at a higher object, by becoming more the theatre of passion; pointing out to men the consequences of their own misconduct; showing the direful effects which ambition, jealousy, love, resentment, and other such strong emotions, when misguided, or left unrestrained, produce upon human life. An Othello, hurried by jealousy to murder his innocent wife; a Jaffier, ensnared by resentment and want, to engage in a conspiracy, and then stung with remorse, and involved in ruin; a Siffredi, through the deceit which he employs for public-spirited ends, bringing destruction on all whom he loved; a Calista, seduced into a criminal intrigue, which overwhelms herself, her father, and all her friends in misery; these, and such as these, are the examples which tragedy now displays to public view; and by means of which, it inculcates on men the proper government of their passions.

Of all the passions which furnish matter to tragedy, that which has most occupied the modern stage, is love. To the ancient theatre, it was in a manner wholly unknown. In few of their tragedies is it ever mentioned; and I remember no more than one which turns upon it, the Hippolitus of Euripides. This was owing to the national manners of the Greeks, and to that greater separation of the two sexes from one another, than has taken place in modern times; aided too perhaps,

by this circumstance, that no female actors ever appeared on the ancient stage. But though no reason appears for the total exclusion of love from the theatre, yet with what justice or propriety it has usurped so much place, as to be in a manner the sole hinge of modern tragedy, may be much questioned. Voltaire, who is no less eminent as a critic than as a poet, declares loudly and strongly against this predominancy of love, as both degrading the majesty and confining the natural limits of tragedy. And assuredly, the mixing of it perpetually with all the great and solemn revolutions of human fortune which belong to the tragic stage, tends to give tragedy too much the air of gallantry, and juvenile entertainment. The Athalie of Racine, the Meropé of Voltaire, the Douglas of Mr. Home, are sufficient proofs that without any assistance from love, the drama is capable of producing its highest effects upon the mind.

THIS seems to be clear, that wherever love is introduced into tragedy, it ought to reign in it, and to give rise to the principal action. It ought to be that sort of love which possesses all the force and majesty of passion; and which occasions great and important consequences. For nothing can have a worse effect, or be more debasing to tragedy, than, together with the manly and heroic passions, to mingle a trifling love intrigue, as a sort of seasoning to the play. The bad effects of this

are sufficiently conspicuous both in the Cato of Mr. Addison, as I had occasion before to remark, and in the Iphigenie of Racine.

AFTER a tragic poet has arranged his subject, and chosen his personages, the next thing he must attend to, is the propriety of sentiments; that they be perfectly suited to the characters of those persons to whom they are attributed, and to the situations in which they are placed. The necessity of observing this general rule is so obvious, that I need not insist upon it. It is principally in the pathetic parts, that both the difficulty and the importance of it are the greatest. Tragedy is the region of passion. We come to it, expecting to be moved; and let the poet be ever so judicious in his conduct, moral in his intentions, and elegant in his style, yet, if he fails in the pathetic, he has no tragic merit, we return cold and disappointed from the performance, and never desire to meet with it more.

TO paint passion so truly and justly as to strike the hearts of the hearers with full sympathy, is a prerogative of genius given to few. It requires strong and ardent sensibility of mind. It requires the author to have the power of entering deeply into the characters which he draws; of becoming for a moment the very person whom he exhibits, and of assuming all his feelings. For, as I have often had occasion to observe, there is no possibi-

lity of speaking properly the language of any passion, without feeling it; and it is to the absence or deadness of real emotion, that we must ascribe the want of success in so many tragic writers, when they attempt being pathetic.

No man, for instance, when he is under the strong agitations of anger or grief, or any such violent passion, ever thinks of describing to another what his feelings at that time are; or of telling them what he resembles. This never was, and never will be, the language of any person, when he is deeply moved. It is the language of one who describes coolly the condition of that person to another; or it is the language of the passionate person himself, after his emotion has subsided, relating what his situation was in the moments of passion. Yet this sort of secondary description is what tragic poets too often give us, instead of the native and primary language of passion. Thus, in Mr. Addison's Cato, when Lucia confesses to Portius her love for him, but, at the same time, swears with the greatest solemnity, that in the present situation of their country she will never marry him, Portius receives this unexpected sentence with the utmost astonishment and grief; at least the poet wants to make us believe that he so received it. How does he express these feelings?

Fix'd in astonishment, I gaze upon thee,
Like one just blasted by a stroke from heav'n,

Who pants for breath, and stiffens yet alive
In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

This makes his whole reply to Lucia. Now did any person, who was of a sudden astonished and overwhelmed with sorrow, ever since the creation of the world, express himself in this manner? This is indeed an excellent description to be given us by another, of a person who was in such a situation. Nothing would have been more proper for a by-stander, recounting this conference, than to have said,

Fix'd in astonishment, he gaz'd upon her,
Like one just blasted by a stroke from heav'n,
Who pants for breath, &c.

But the person, who is himself concerned, speaks, on such an occasion, in a very different manner. He gives vent to his feelings; he pleads for pity; he dwells upon the cause of his grief and astonishment; but never thinks of describing his own person and looks, and showing us, by a simile, what he resembles. Such representations of passions are no better in poetry, than it would be in painting, to make a label issue from the mouth of a figure, bidding us remark, that this figure represents an astonished, or a grieved person.

On some other occasions, when poets do not employ this sort of descriptive language in passion, they are too apt to run into forced and unnatural thoughts, in order to exaggerate the feelings of

persons, whom they would paint as very strongly moved. When Osmyn, in the Mourning Bride, after parting with Almeria, regrets, in a long soliloquy, that his eyes only see objects that are present, and cannot see Almeria after she is gone; when Jane Shore, in Mr. Rowe's tragedy, on meeting with her husband in her extreme distress, and finding that he had forgiven her, calls on the rains to give her their drops and the springs to give her their streams, that she may never want a supply of tears; in such passages, we see very plainly, that it is neither Osmyn, nor Jane Shore, that speak; but the poet himself in his own person, who, instead of assuming the feelings of those whom he means to exhibit, and speaking as they would have done in such situations, is straining his fancy, and spurring up his genius to say something that shall be uncommonly strong and lively.

If we attend to the language that is spoken by persons under the influence of real passion, we shall find it always plain and simple; abounding indeed with those figures which express a disturbed and impetuous state of mind, such as interrogations, exclamations, and apostrophes; but never employing those which belong to the mere embellishment and parade of speech. We never meet with any subtilty or refinement, in the sentiments of real passion. The thoughts which passion suggests, are always plain and obvious ones, arising directly from its object. Passion never reasons, nor speculates, till its ardour begins to cool. It

never leads to long discourse or declamation. On the contrary, it expresses itself most commonly in short, broken, and interrupted speeches; corresponding to the violent and desultory emotions of the mind.

WHEN we examine the French tragedians by these principles, which seem clearly founded in nature, we find them often deficient. Though in many parts of tragic composition, they have great merit; though in exciting soft and tender emotions, some of them are very successful; yet in the high and strong pathetic, they generally fail. Their passionate speeches too often run into long declamation. There is too much reasoning and refinement; too much pomp and studied beauty in them. They rather convey a feeble impression of passion, than awaken any strong sympathy in the reader's mind.

SOPHOCLES and Euripides are much more successful in this part of composition. In their pathetic scenes, we find no unnatural refinement; no exaggerated thoughts. They set before us the plain and direct feelings of nature, in simple expressive language; and therefore, on great occasions, they seldom fail of touching the heart*.

* Nothing, for instance, can be more touching and pathetic than the address which Medea, in Euripides, makes to her children, when she had formed the resolution of putting them to death: and nothing more natural, than the conflict which she is described as suffering within herself on that occasion:

This too is Shakespeare's great excellency; and to this it is principally owing, that his dramatic productions, notwithstanding their many imperfections, have been so long the favourites of the public. He is more faithful to the true language of nature, in the midst of passion, than any writer. He gives us this language, unadulterated by art; and more instances of it can be quoted from him than from all other tragic poets taken together. I shall refer only to that admirable scene in Macbeth, where Macduff receives the account of his wife and all his children being slaughtered in his absence. The emotions, first of grief, and then of the most fierce resentment rising against Macbeth, are painted in such a manner that there is no heart but must feel them, and no fancy can conceive any thing more expressive of nature.

WITH regard to moral sentiments and reflections in tragedies, it is clear that they must not recur too often. They lose their effect, when unseasonably crowded. They render the play pedantic and declamatory. This is remarkably the case with those Latin tragedies which go under the name of Seneca, which are little more than a col-

---

Φευ, Φευ· τι προσδερκεσθε μ· ομμασιν τεκνα;
Τι προσγελατε τον παυυσατον γελων;
Αι, αι· τι δρασω; καρδια γαρ οιχεται·
Γυναικες, ὁμμα Φαιδρον ως ειδον τεκνων
Ουκ ἀν δυναιμην. χαιρετω βεγευματα, &c.
EUR. MED. l. 1040.

lection of declamations and moral sentences, wrought up with a quaint brilliancy, which suited the prevailing taste of that age.

I AM not, however, of opinion, that moral reflections ought to be altogether omitted in tragedies. When properly introduced, they give dignity to the composition, and, on many occasions, they are extremely natural. When persons are under any uncommon distress, when they are beholding in others, or experiencing in themselves, the vicissitudes of human fortune; indeed, when they are placed in any of the great and trying situations of life, serious and moral reflections naturally occur to them, whether they be persons of much virtue or not. Almost every human being is, on such occasions, disposed to be serious. It is then the natural tone of the mind; and therefore no tragic poet should omit such proper opportunities, when they occur, for favouring the interests of virtue. Cardinal Wolsey's soliloquy upon his fall, for instance, in Shakespeare, when he bids a long farewell to all his greatness, and the advices which he afterwards gives to Cromwell, are, in his situation, extremely natural; touch and please all readers; and are at once instructive and affecting. Much of the merit of Mr. Addison's Cato depends upon that moral turn of thought which distinguishes it. I have had occasion, both in this Lecture and in the preceding one, to take notice of some of its defects; and certainly neither for warmth of passion nor proper conduct of the

plot, is it at all eminent. It does not, however, follow, that it is destitute of merit. For, by the purity and beauty of the language, by the dignity of Cato's character, by that ardour of public spirit, and those virtuous sentiments of which it is full, it has always commanded high regard; and has, both in our own country and among foreigners, acquired no small reputation.

THE style and versification of tragedy ought to be free, easy, and varied. Our blank verse is happily suited to this purpose. It has sufficient majesty for raising the style; it can descend to the simple and familiar; it is susceptible of great variety of cadence; and is quite free from the constraint and monotony of rhyme. For monotony is, above all things, to be avoided by a tragic poet. If he maintains every where the same stateliness of style, if he uniformly keeps up the same run of measure and harmony in his verse, he cannot fail of becoming insipid. He should not indeed sink into flat and careless lines; his style should always have force and dignity, but not the uniform dignity of epic poetry. It should assume that briskness and ease, which is suited to the freedom of dialogue, and the fluctuations of passion.

ONE of the greatest misfortunes of the French tragedy is, its being always written in rhyme. The nature of the French language, indeed, requires this, in order to distinguish the style from mere prose. But it fetters the freedom of the

tragic dialogue, fills it with a languid monotony, and is, in a manner, fatal to the high strength and power of passion. Voltaire maintains, that the difficulty of composing in French rhyme, is one great cause of the pleasure which the audience receives from the composition. Tragedy would be ruined, says he, if we were to write it in blank verse; take away the difficulty, and you take away the whole merit. A strange idea! as if the entertainment of the audience arose, not from the emotions which the poet is successful in awakening, but from a reflection on the toil which he endured in his closet, from assorting male and female rhymes. With regard to those splendid comparisons in rhyme, and strings of couplets, with which it was, some time ago fashionable for our English poets to conclude, not only every act of a tragedy, but sometimes also the most interesting scenes, nothing need be said, but that they were the most perfect barbarisms; childish ornaments, introduced to please a false taste in the audience; and now universally laid aside.

HAVING thus treated of all the different parts of tragedy, I shall conclude the subject with a short view of the Greek, the French, and the English stage, and with observations on the principal writers.

MOST of the distinguishing characters of the Greek tragedy have been already occasionally mentioned. It was embellished with the lyric

poetry of the chorus, of the origin of which, and of the advantages and disadvantages attending it, I treated fully in the preceding Lecture. The plot was always exceedingly simple. It admitted of few incidents. It was conducted, with a very exact regard to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery, or the intervention of the gods, was employed; and, which is very faulty, the final unravelling sometimes made to turn upon it. Love, except in one or two instances, was never admitted into the Greek tragedy. Their subjects were often founded on destiny, or inevitable misfortunes. A vein of religious and moral sentiment always runs through them; but they made less use than the moderns of the combat of the passions, and of the distresses which our passions bring upon us. Their plots were all taken from the ancient traditionary stories of their own nation. Hercules furnishes matter for two tragedies. The history of Œdipus, king of Thebes, and his unfortunate family, for six. The War of Troy, with its consequences, for no fewer than seventeen. There is only one, of later date than this which is the Persæ, or expedition of Xerxes, by Æschylus.

ÆSCHYLUS is the father of Greek tragedy, and exhibits both the beauties and the defects of an early original writer. He is bold, nervous, and animated; but very obscure and difficult to be understood, partly by reason of the incorrect state in which we have his works (they having suf-

fered more by time, than any of the ancient tragedians), and partly on account of the nature of his style, which is crowded with metaphors, often harsh and tumid. He abounds with martial ideas and descriptions. He has much fire and elevation; less of tenderness than of force. He delights in the marvellous. The Ghost of Darius in the Persæ, the Inspiration of Cassandra in Agamemnon, and the Songs of the Furies in the Eumenides, are beautiful in their kind, and strongly expressive of his genius.

SOPHOCLES is the most masterly of the three Greek tragedians; the most correct in the conduct of his subjects; the most just and sublime in his sentiments. He is eminent for his descriptive talent. The relation of the death of Œdipus, in his Œdipus Coloneus, and of the death of Hæmon and Antigone, in his Antigone, are perfect patterns of description to tragic poets. Euripides is esteemed more tender than Sophocles; and he is fuller of moral sentiments. But, in the conduct of his plays he is more incorrect and negligent; his expositions, or openings of the subject, are made in a less artful manner; and the songs of his chorus, though remarkably poetical, have, commonly, less connection with the main action than those of Sophocles. Both Euripides and Sophocles, however, have very high merit as tragic poets. They are elegant and beautiful in their style; just, for the most part, in their thoughts; they speak with

the voice of nature; and, making allowance for the difference of ancient and modern ideas, in the midst of all their simplicity, they are touching and interesting.

THE circumstances of theatrical representation on the stages of Greece and Rome, were, in several respects, very singular, and widely different from what obtains among us. Not only were the songs of the chorus accompanied with instrumental music, but as the Abbé de Bos, in his reflections on Poetry and Painting, has proved, with much curious erudition; the dialogue part had also a modulation of its own, which was capable of being set to notes; it was carried on in a sort of recitative between the actors, and was supported by instruments. He has farther attempted to prove, but the proof seems more incomplete, that on some occasions, on the Roman stage, the pronouncing and gesticulating parts were divided; that one actor spoke, and another performed the gestures and motions corresponding to what the first said. The actors in tragedy wore a long robe, called Syrma, which flowed upon the stage. They were raised upon Cothurni, which rendered their stature uncommonly high; and they always played in masks. These masks were like helmets which covered the whole head; the mouths of them were so contrived, as to give an artificial sound to the voice, in order to make it be heard over their vast theatres; and the visage was so

formed and painted, as to suit the age, characters, or dispositions of the persons represented. When, during the course of one scene, different emotions were to appear in the same person, the mask is said to have been so painted, that the actor, by turning one or other profile of his face to the spectators, expressed the change of the situation. This, however, was a contrivance attended with many disadvantages. The mask must have deprived the spectators of all the pleasure which arises from the natural animated expression of the eye, and the countenance; and, joined with the other circumstances which I have mentioned, is apt to give us but an unfavourable idea of the dramatic representations of the ancients. In defence of them, it must, at the same time, be remembered, that their theatres were vastly more extensive in the area than ours, and filled with immense crowds. They were always uncovered, and exposed to the open air. The actors were beheld at a much greater distance, and of course much more imperfectly by the bulk of the spectators, which both rendered their looks of less consequence, and might make it in some degree necessary that their features should be exaggerated, the sound of their voices enlarged, and their whole appearance magnified beyond the life, in order to make the stronger impression. It is certain, that, as dramatic spectacles were the favourite entertainments of the Greeks and Romans, the attention given to their proper exhibition, and the magnificence of the apparatus

bestowed on their theatres, far exceeded any thing that has been attempted in modern ages.

In the compositions of some of the French dramatic writers, particularly Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, tragedy has appeared with much lustre and dignity. They must be allowed to have improved upon the ancients, in introducing more incidents, a greater variety of passions, a fuller display of characters, and in rendering the subject thereby more interesting. They have studied to imitate the ancient models in regularity of conduct. They are attentive to all the unities, and to all the decorums of sentiment and morality; and their style is, generally, very poetical and elegant. What an English taste is most apt to censure in them, is the want of fervour, strength, and the natural language of passion. There is often too much conversation in their pieces, instead of action. They are too declamatory, as was before observed, when they should be passionate; too refined, when they should be simple. Voltaire freely acknowledges these defects of the French theatre. He admits, that their best tragedies do not make a sufficient impression on the heart; that the gallantry which reigns in them, and the long fine-spun dialogue with which they over-abound, frequently spread a languor over them; that the authors seemed to be afraid of being too tragic; and very candidly gives it as his judgment, that an union of the vehemence and the action, which charac-

terise the English theatre, with the correctness and decorum of the French theatre, would be necessary to form a perfect tragedy.

CORNEILLE, who is properly the father of French tragedy, is distinguished by the majesty and grandeur of his sentiments, and the fruitfulness of his imagination. His genius was unquestionably very rich, but seemed more turned towards the epic than the tragic vein; for, in general, he is magnificent and splendid, rather than tender and touching. He is the most declamatory of all the French tragedians. He united the copiousness of Dryden with the fire of Lucan, and he resembles them also in their faults; in their extravagance and impetuosity. He has composed a great number of tragedies, very unequal in their merit. His best and most esteemed pieces, are the Cid, Horace, Polyeucte, and Cinna.

RACINE, as a tragic poet, is much superior to Corneille. He wanted the copiousness and grandeur of Corneille's imagination; but is free from his bombast, and excels him greatly in tenderness. Few poets, indeed, are more tender and moving than Racine. His Phædra, his Andromaque, his Athalie, and his Mithridate, are excellent dramatic performances, and do no small honour to the French stage. His language and versification are uncommonly beautiful. Of all the French authors, he appears to me to have most excelled in poeti-

cal style; to have managed their rhyme with the greatest advantage and facility, and to have given it the most complete harmony. Voltaire has, again and again, pronounced Racine's Athalie to be the " Chef d'Oeuvre" of the French stage. It is altogether a sacred drama, and owes much of its elevation to the majesty of religion; but it is less tender and interesting than Andromaque. Racine has formed two of his plays upon plans of Euripides. In the Phædra he is extremely successful, but not so, in my opinion, in the Iphigenie; where he has degraded the ancient characters by unseasonable gallantry. Achilles is a French lover; and Eriphile, a modern lady.*

---

* The characters of Corneille and Racine are happily contrasted with each other, in the following beautiful lines of a French poet, which will gratify several readers:

CORNEILLE.

Illum nobilibus majestas evehit ălis
Vertice tangentem nubes: stant ordine longo
Magnanimi circum heroës, fulgentibus omnes
Induti trabeis; Polyeuctus, Cinna, Seleucus,
Et Cidus, et rugis signatus Horatius ora.

RACINE.

Hunc circumvolitat penna alludente Cupido,
Vincla triumphatis insternens florea scenis;
Colligit hæc mollis genius, levibusque catenis
Heröas stringit dociles, Pyrrhosque, Titosque,
Pedilasque, ac Hippolytos, qui sponte sequuntur

VOLTAIRE, in several of his tragedies, is inferior to none of his predecessors. In one great article he has outdone them all, in the delicate and interesting situations which he has contrived to introduce. In these lies his chief strength. He is not, indeed, exempt from the defects of the other

---

Servitium, facilesque ferunt in vincula palmas.
Ingentes nimirum animos Cornelius ingens,
Et quales habet ipse, suis heröibus afflat
Sublimes sensus; vox olli mascula, magnum os,
Nec mortale sonans. Rapido fluit impete vena,
Vena Sophocleis non inficianda fluentis.
Racinius Gallis haud visos ante theatris
Mollior ingenio teneros induxit amores.
Magnanimos quamvis sensus sub pectore verset
Agrippina, licet Romano robore Burrhus
Polleat, et magni generosa superbia Pori
Non semel eniteat, tamen esse ad mollia natum
Credideris vatem; vox olli mellea, lenis
Spiritus est; non ille animis vim concitus infert,
At cœcos animorum aditus rimatur, et imis
Mentibus occultos, syren penetrabilis, ictus
Insinuans, palpando ferit, læditque placendo.
Vena fluit facili non intermissa nitore,
Nec rapidos semper volvit cum murmure fluctus,
Agmine sed leni fluitat. Seu gramina lambit
Rivulus, et cœco per prata virentia lapsu,
Aufugiens, tacita fluit indeprensus arena;
Flore micant ripæ illimes; huc vulgus amantum
Convolat, et lacrymis auget rivalibus undas:
Singultus undæ referunt, gemitusque sonoros
Ingeminant, molli gemitus imitante susurro.

Templum Tragœdiæ, per FR. MARSY,
é Societate Jesu.

French tragedians, of wanting force, and of being sometimes too long and declamatory in his speeches; but his characters are drawn with spirit, his events are striking, and in his sentiments there is much elevation. His Zayre, Alzire, Meropé, and Orphan of China, are four capital tragedies, and deserve the highest praise. What one might perhaps not expect, Voltaire is, in the strain of his sentiments, the most religious, and the most moral of all tragic poets.

THOUGH the musical dramas of Metastasio fulfil not the character of just and regular tragedies, they approach however so near to it, and possess so much merit, that it would be unjust to pass them over without notice. For the elegance of style, the charms of lyric poetry, and the beauties of sentiment, they are eminent. They abound in well-contrived and interesting situations. The dialogue, by its closeness and rapidity, carries a considerable resemblance to that of the ancient Greek tragedies; and is both more animated and more natural, than the long declamation of the French theatre. But the shortness of the several dramas, and the intermixture of so much lyric poetry as belongs to this sort of composition, often occasions the course of the incidents to be hurried on too quickly, and prevents that consistent display of characters, and that full preparation of events, which are necessary to give a proper verisimilitude to tragedy.

IT only now remains to speak of the state of tragedy in Great Britain; the general character of which is, that it is more animated and passionate than French tragedy, but more irregular and incorrect, and less attentive to decorum and to elegance. The pathetic, it must always be remembered, is the soul of tragedy. The English, therefore, must be allowed to have aimed at the highest species of excellence; though, in the execution, they have not always joined the other beauties that ought to accompany the pathetic.

THE first object which presents itself to us on the English theatre, is the great Shakespeare. Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for tragedy and comedy, are altogether unrivalled *. But, at the

* The character which Dryden has drawn of Shakespeare is not only just, but uncommonly elegant and happy. "He was "the man, who, of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had "the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of "nature were still present to him, and he drew them not labo- "riously, but luckily. When he describes any thing, you more "than see it; you feel it too. They who accuse him of wanting "learning, give him the greatest commendation. He was natur- "ally learned. He needed not the spectacles of books to read "nature. He looked inward, and found her there. I cannot "say he is every where alike. Were he so, I should do him in- "jury to compare him to the greatest of mankind. He is many "times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches; "his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, "when some great occasion is presented to him." DRYDEN'S Essay of Dramatic Poetry.

same time, it is genius shooting wild; deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolised by the British nation; much has been said, and much has been written concerning him; criticism has been drawn to the very dregs, in commentaries upon his words and witticisms; and yet it remains, to this day, in doubt, whether his beauties, or his faults, be greatest. Admirable scenes and passages, without number, there are in his plays; passages beyond what are to be found in any other dramatic writer; but there is hardly any one of his plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious and comic in one piece, we are often interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words, which he is fond of pursuing; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur, on occasions when we would least wish to meet with them. All these faults, however, Shakespeare redeems by two of the greatest excellencies which any tragic poet can possess; his lively and diversified paintings of character; his strong and natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues; on these his merit rests. Notwithstanding his many absurdities, all the while we are reading his plays, we find ourselves in the midst of our fellows; we meet with men, vulgar perhaps in their manners, coarse

or harsh in their sentiments, but still they are men; they speak with human voices, and are actuated by human passions; we are interested in what they say or do, because we feel that they are of the same nature with ourselves. It is therefore no matter of wonder, that from the more polished and regular, but more cold and artificial performances of other poets, the public should return with pleasure to such warm and genuine representations of human nature. Shakespeare possesses likewise the merit of having created, for himself, a sort of world of præternatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are described with such circumstances of awful and mysterious solemnity, and speak a language so peculiar to themselves, as strongly to affect the imagination. His two master-pieces, and in which, in my opinion, the strength of his genius chiefly appears, are Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are, properly speaking, neither tragedies nor comedies; but a peculiar species of dramatic entertainment, calculated to describe the manners of the times of which he treats, to exhibit the principal characters, and to fix our imagination on the most interesting events and revolutions of our own country*.

---

* See an excellent defence of Shakespeare's Historical plays, and several just observations on his peculiar excellencies as a tragic poet, in Mrs. Montague's Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare.

AFTER the age of Shakespeare, we can produce in the English language several detached tragedies of considerable merit. But we have not many dramatic writers, whose whole works are entitled either to particular criticism, or very high praise. In the tragedies of Dryden and Lee, there is much fire, but mixed with much fustian and rant. Lee's "Theodosius, or the Force of Love," is the best of his pieces, and, in some of the scenes, does not want tenderness and warmth; though romantic in the plan, and extravagant in the sentiments. Otway was endowed with a high portion of the tragic spirit; which appears to great advantage in his two principal tragedies, "The Orphan," and "Venice Preserved." In these, he is perhaps too tragic; the distresses being so deep as to tear and overwhelm the mind. He is a writer, doubtless, of genius and strong passion; but, at the same time, exceedingly gross and indelicate. No tragedies are less moral than those of Otway. There are no generous or noble sentiments in them; but a licentious spirit often discovers itself. He is the very opposite of the French decorum; and has contrived to introduce obscenity and indecent allusions, into the midst of deep tragedy.

ROWE'S tragedies make a contrast to those of Otway. He is full of elevated and moral sentiments. The poetry is often good, and the language always pure and elegant; but in most of his plays, he is too cold and uninteresting; and flowery

rather than tragic. Two, however, he has produced, which deserve to be exempted from this censure, Jane Shore and the Fair Penitent; in both of which, there are so many tender and truly pathetic scenes, as to render them justly favourites of the public.

Dr. Young's Revenge, is a play which discovers genius and fire; but wants tenderness, and turns too much upon the shocking and direful passions. In Congreve's Mourning Bride, there are some fine situations, and much good poetry. The two first acts are admirable. The meeting of Almeria with her husband Osmyn, in the tomb of Anselmo, is one of the most solemn and striking situations to be found in any tragedy. The defects in the catastrophe, I pointed out in the last Lecture. Mr. Thomson's tragedies are too full of a stiff morality, which renders them dull and formal. Tancred and Sigismunda, far excels the rest; and for the plot, the characters and sentiments, justly deserves a place among the best English tragedies. Of later pieces, and of living authors, it is not my purpose to treat.

Upon the whole, reviewing the tragic compositions of different nations, the following conclusions arise. A Greek tragedy is the relation of any distressful or melancholy incident; sometimes the effect of passion or crime, oftener of the decree of the gods, simply exposed; without much variety

of parts or events, but naturally and beautifully set before us; heightened by the poetry of the chorus. A French tragedy is a series of artful and refined conversations, founded upon a variety of tragical and interesting situations; carried on with little action and vehemence; but with much poetical beauty, and high propriety and decorum. An English tragedy is the combat of strong passions, set before us in all their violence; producing deep disasters; often irregularly conducted; abounding in action; and filling the spectators with grief. The ancient tragedies were more natural and simple; the modern are more artful and complex. Among the French, there is more correctness; among the English, more fire. Andromaque and Zayre soften, Othello and Venice Preserved, rend the heart. It deserves remark, that three of the greatest master-pieces of the French tragic theatre, turn wholly upon religious subjects: the Athalie of Racine, the Polyeucte of Corneille, and the Zayre of Voltaire. The first is founded upon a historical passage of the Old Testament; in the other two, the distress arises from the zeal and attachment of the principal personages to the Christian faith; and in all the three, the authors have, with much propriety, availed themselves of the majesty which may be derived from religious ideas.

LECTURE XLVII.

COMEDY—GREEK AND ROMAN—FRENCH—ENGLISH COMEDY.

COMEDY is sufficiently discriminated from tragedy, by its general spirit and strain. While pity and terror, and the other strong passions, form the province of the latter, the chief, or rather sole instrument of the former, is ridicule. Comedy proposes for its object, neither the great sufferings, nor the great crimes of men; but their follies and slighter vices, those parts of their character, which raise in beholders a sense of impropriety, which expose them to be censured, and laughed at by others, or which render them troublesome in civil society.

THIS general idea of comedy, as a satirical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of mankind, is an idea very moral and useful. There is nothing in the nature, or general plan of this kind of composition, that renders it liable to censure. To polish the manners of men, to promote attention to the proper decorums of social behaviour, and, above all, to render vice ridiculous, is doing

a real service to the world. Many vices might be more successfully exploded, by employing ridicule against them, than by serious attacks and arguments. At the same time, it must be confessed, that ridicule is an instrument of such a nature, that when managed by unskilful, or improper hands, there is hazard of its doing mischief, instead of good, to society. For ridicule is far from being, as some have maintained it to be, a proper test of truth. On the contrary, it is apt to mislead, and seduce, by the colours which it throws upon its objects; and it is often more difficult to judge, whether these colours be natural and proper, than it is to distinguish between simple truth and error. Licentious writers, therefore, of the comic class, have too often had it in their power to cast a ridicule upon characters and objects which did not deserve it. But this is a fault, not owing to the nature of comedy, but to the genius and turn of the writers of it. In the hands of a loose, immoral author, comedy will mislead and corrupt; while, in those of a virtuous and well-intentioned one, it will be not only a gay and innocent, but a laudable and useful entertainment. French comedy is an excellent school of manners; while English comedy has been too often the school of vice.

THE rules respecting the dramatic action, which I delivered in the first Lecture upon tragedy, belong equally to comedy; and hence, of course, our disquisitions concerning it are shortened. It is

equally necessary to both these forms of dramatic composition, that there be a proper unity of action and subject, that the unities of time and place be, as much as possible, preserved; that is, that the time of the action be brought within reasonable bounds; and the place of the action never changed, at least, not during the course of each act; that the several scenes or successive conversations be properly linked together; that the stage be never totally evacuated till the act closes; and that the reason should appear to us, why the personages, who fill up the different scenes, enter and go off the stage, at the time when they are made to do so. The scope of all these rules, I showed, was to bring the imitation as near as possible to probability; which is always necessary, in order to any imitation giving us pleasure. This reason requires, perhaps, a stricter observance of the dramatic rules in comedy, than in tragedy. For the action of comedy being more familiar to us than that of tragedy, more like what we are accustomed to see in common life, we judge more easily of what is probable, and are more hurt by the want of it. The probable and the natural, both in the conduct of the story, and in the characters and sentiments of the persons who are introduced, are the great foundation, it must always be remembered, of the whole beauty of comedy.

THE subjects of tragedy are not limited to any country, or to any age. The tragic poet may

lay his scene in whatever region he pleases. He may form his subject upon the history, either of his own, or of a foreign country; and he may take it from any period that is agreeable to him, however remote in time. The reverse of this holds in comedy, for a clear and obvious reason. In the great vices, great virtues, and high passions, men of all countries and ages resemble one another; and are therefore equally subjects for the tragic muse. But those decorums of behaviour, those lesser discriminations of character, which afford subject for comedy, change with the differences of countries and times; and can never be so well understood by foreigners, as by natives. We weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome, as freely as we do for those of our own country: but we are touched with the ridicule of such manners and such characters only, as we see and know; and therefore the scene and subject of comedy should always be laid in our own country, and in our own times. The comic poet, who aims at correcting improprieties and follies of behaviour, should study "to catch the manners "living as they rise." It is not his business to amuse us with a tale of the last age, or with a Spanish or a French intrigue; but to give us pictures taken from among ourselves; to satirize reigning and present vices; to exhibit to the age a faithful copy of itself, with its humours, its follies, and its extravagancies. It is only by laying his plan in this manner, that he can add weight and dignity to the entertainment which he gives us.

Plautus, it is true, and Terence, did not follow this rule. They laid the scene of their comedies in Greece, and adopted the Greek laws and customs. But it must be remembered, that comedy was, in their age, but a new entertainment in Rome; and that then they contented themselves with imitating, often with translating merely, the comedies of Menander, and other Greek writers. In aftertimes, it is known that the Romans had the "Co-" mœdia Togata," or what was founded on their own manners, as well as the "Comœdia Palliata," or what was taken from the Greeks.

COMEDY may be divided into two kinds; comedy of character, and comedy of intrigue. In the latter, the plot, or the action of the play, is made the principal object. In the former, the display of some peculiar character is chiefly aimed at; the action is contrived altogether with a view to this end, and is treated as subordinate to it. The French abound most in comedies of character. All Moliere's capital pieces are of this sort; his Avare, for instance, Misanthrope, Tartuffe; and such are Destouche's also, and those of the other chief French comedians. The English abound more in comedies of intrigue. In the plays of Congreve, and, in general, in all our comedies, there is much more story, more bustle and action, than on the French theatre.

IN order to give this sort of composition its

proper advantage, these two kinds should be properly mixed together. Without some interesting and well-conducted story, mere conversation is apt to become insipid. There should be always as much intrigue, as to give us something to wish, and something to fear. The incidents should so succeed one another, as to produce striking situations, and to fix our attention; while they afford at the same time a proper field for the exhibition of character. For the poet must never forget, that to exhibit characters and manners, is his principal object. The action in comedy, though it demands his care, in order to render it animated and natural, is a less significant and important part of the performance, than the action in tragedy: as in comedy, it is what men say, and how they behave, that draws our attention, rather than what they perform, or what they suffer. Hence it is a great fault to overcharge it with too much intrigue; and those intricate Spanish plots that were fashionable for a while, carried on by perplexed apartments, dark entries, and disguised habits, are now justly condemned and laid aside: for by such conduct, the main use of comedy was lost. The attention of the spectators, instead of being directed towards any display of characters, was fixed upon the surprising turns and revolutions of the intrigue; and comedy was changed into a mere novel.

In the management of characters, one of the most common faults of comic writers, is the car-

rying of them too far beyond life. Wherever ridicule is concerned, it is indeed extremely difficult to hit the precise point where true wit ends, and buffoonery begins. When the miser, for instance, in Plautus, searching the person whom he suspects for having stolen his casket, after examining first his right hand, and then his left, cries out, "ostende etiam tertiam," "shew me your third "hand" (a stroke too which Moliere has copied from him,) there is no one but must be sensible of the extravagance. Certain degrees of exaggeration are allowed to the comedian; but there are limits set to it by nature and good taste; and supposing the miser to be ever so much engrossed by his jealousy and his suspicions, it is impossible to conceive any man in his wits suspecting another of having more than two hands.

CHARACTERS in comedy ought to be clearly distinguished from one another; but the artificial contrasting of characters, and the introducing them always in pairs, and by opposites, gives too theatrical and affected an air to the piece. This is become too common a resource of comic writers, in order to heighten their characters, and display them to more advantage. As soon as the violent and impatient person arrives upon the stage, the spectator knows that, in the next scene, he is to be contrasted with the mild and good natured man; or if one of the lovers introduced be remarkably gay and airy, we are sure that his

companion is to be a grave and serious lover; like Frankly and Bellamy, Clarinda and Jacintha, in Dr. Hoadly's Suspicious Husband. Such production of characters, by pairs, is like the employment of the figure antithesis in discourse, which, as I formerly observed, gives brilliancy indeed upon occasions, but is too apparently a rhetorical artifice. In every sort of composition, the perfection of art is to conceal art. A masterly writer will therefore give us his characters, distinguished rather by such shades of diversity as are commonly found in society, than marked with such strong oppositions, as are rarely brought into actual contrast, in any of the circumstances of life.

THE style of comedy ought to be pure, elegant, and lively, very seldom rising higher than the ordinary tone of polite conversation; and, upon no occasion, descending into vulgar, mean, and gross expressions. Here the French rhyme, which in many of their comedies they have preserved, occurs as an unnatural bondage. Certainly, if prose belongs to any composition whatever, it is to that which imitates the conversation of men in ordinary life. One of the most difficult circumstances in writing comedy, and one too, upon which the success of it very much depends, is to maintain, throughout, a current of easy, genteel, unaffected dialogue, without pertness and flippancy; without too much studied and unseasonable wit; without dullness and formality. Too few of our English

comedies are distinguished for this happy turn of conversation; most of them are liable to one or other of the exceptions I have mentioned. The Careless Husband, and, perhaps, we may add the Provoked Husband, and the Suspicious Husband, seem to have more merit than most of them, for easy and natural dialogue.

THESE are the chief observations that occur to me, concerning the general principles of this species of dramatic writing, as distinguished from tragedy. But its nature and spirit will be still better understood, by a short history of its progress; and a view of the manner in which it has been carried on by authors of different nations.

TRAGEDY is generally supposed to have been more ancient among the Greeks than comedy. We have fewer lights concerning the origin and progress of the latter. What is most probable, is, that, like the other, it took its rise accidentally from the diversions peculiar to the feast of Bacchus, and from Thespis and his cart; till, by degrees, it diverged into an entertainment of a quite different nature from solemn and heroic tragedy. Critics distinguish three stages of comedy, among the Greeks; which they call the ancient, the middle, and the new.

THE ancient comedy consisted in direct and avowed satire against particular known persons,

who were brought upon the stage by name. Of this nature are the plays of Aristophanes, eleven of which are still extant; plays of a very singular nature, and wholly different from all compositions which have, since that age, borne the name of comedy. They shew what a turbulent and licentious republic that of Athens was, and what unrestrained scope the Athenians gave to ridicule, when they could suffer the most illustrious personages of their state, their generals, and their magistrates, Cleon, Lamachus, Nicias, Alcibiades, not to mention Socrates the philosopher, and Euripides the poet, to be publicly made the subject of comedy. Several of Aristophanes's plays are wholly political satires upon public management, and the conduct of generals and statesmen, during the Peloponnesian war. They are so full of political allegories and allusions, that it is impossible to understand them without a considerable knowledge of the history of those times. They abound too with parodies of the great tragic poets, particularly of Euripides; to whom the author bore much enmity, and has written two comedies, almost wholly in order to ridicule him.

VIVACITY, satire, and buffoonery, are the characteristics of Aristophanes. Genius and force he displays upon many occasions; but his performances, upon the whole, are not calculated to give us any high opinion of the Attic taste of wit, in his age. They seem, indeed, to have been composed for the mob. The ridicule employed in

them is extravagant; the wit, for the most part, buffoonish and farcical; the personal raillery, biting and cruel; and the obscenity that reigns in them is gross and intolerable. The treatment given by this comedian, to Socrates the philosopher, in his play of "The Clouds," is well known; but however it might tend to disparage Socrates in the public esteem, P. Brumoy, in his Theatre Grec, makes it appear, that it could not have been, as is commonly supposed, the cause of decreeing the death of that philosopher, which did not happen till twenty-three years after the representation of Aristophanes's Clouds. There is a chorus in Aristophanes's plays; but altogether of an irregular kind. It is partly serious, partly comic; sometimes mingle in the action, sometimes addresses the spectators, defends the author, and attacks his enemies.

SOON after the days of Aristophanes, the liberty of attacking persons on the stage by name, being found of dangerous consequence to the public peace, was prohibited by law. The chorus also was, at this period, banished from the comic theatre, as having been an instrument of too much licence and abuse. Then, what is called the middle comedy took rise, which was no other than an elusion of the law. Fictitious names, indeed, were employed; but living persons were still attacked, and described in such a manner as to be sufficiently known. Of these comic pieces, we have no remains. To them succeeded the new comedy;

when the stage being obliged to desist wholly from personal ridicule, became, what it is now, the picture of manners and characters, but not of particular persons. Menander was the most distinguished author of this kind among the Greeks; and both from the imitations of him by Terence, and the account given of him by Plutarch, we have much reason to regret that his writings have perished; as he appears to have reformed in a very high degree, the public taste, and to have set the model of correct, elegant, and moral comedy.

THE only remains which we now have of the new comedy, among the ancients, are the plays of Plautus and Terence; both of whom were formed upon the Greek writers. Plautus is distinguished for very expressive language, and a great degree of the vis comica. As he wrote in an early period, he bears several marks of the rudeness of the dramatic art, among the Romans, in his time. He opens his plays with prologues, which sometimes pre-occupy the subject of the whole peace. The representation too, and the action of the comedy, are sometimes confounded; the actor departing from his character, and addressing the audience. There is too much low wit and scurrility in Plautus; too much of quaint conceit, and play upon words. But withal, he displays more variety, and more force than Terence. His characters are always strongly marked, though sometimes coarsely. His Amphytrion has

been copied both by Moliere and by Dryden; and his Miser also (in the Aulularia), is the foundation of a capital play of Moliere's which has been once and again imitated on the English stage. Than Terence, nothing can be more delicate, more polished, and elegant. His style is a model of the purest and most graceful Latinity. His dialogue is always decent and correct; and he possesses, beyond most writers, the art of relating with that beautiful picturesque simplicity, which never fails to please. His morality is, in general, unexceptionable. The situations which he introduces, are often tender and interesting; and many of his sentiments touch the heart. Hence, he may be considered as the founder of that serious comedy, which has, of late years, been revived, and of which I shall have occasion afterwards to speak. If he fails in any thing, it is in sprightliness and strength. Both in his characters, and in his plots, there is too much sameness and uniformity throughout all his plays; he copied Menander, and is said not to have equalled him*. In order to form

* Julius Cæsar has given us his opinion of Terence, in the following lines, which are preserved in the Life of Terence, ascribed to Suetonius:

Tu quoque, tu in summis, ô dimidiate Menander,
Poneris, et merito, puri sermonis amator;
Lenibus atque utinam scriptis adjuncta foret vis
Comica, ut æquato virtus polleret honore
Cum Græcis, neque in hac despectus parte jaceres;
Unum hoc maceror, et doleo tibi deesse, Terenti.

a perfect comic author, an union would be requisite of the spirit and fire of Plautus, with the grace and correctness of Terence.

WHEN we enter on the view of modern comedy, one of the first objects which presents itself, is the Spanish theatre, which has been remarkably fertile in dramatic productions. Lopez de Vega, Guillin, and Calderon, are the chief Spanish comedians. Lopez de Vega, who is by much the most famous of them, is said to have written above a thousand plays; but our surprise at the number of his productions will be diminished, by being informed of their nature. From the account which M. Perron de Gastera, a French writer, gives of them, it would seem, that our Shakespeare is perfectly a regular and methodical author, in comparison of Lopez. He throws aside all regard to the three unities, or to any of the established forms of dramatic writing. One play often includes many years, nay, the whole life of a man. The scene, during the first act, is laid in Spain, the next in Italy, and the third in Africa. His plays are mostly of the historical kind, founded on the annals of the country; and they are, generally, a sort of tragi-comedies; or a mixture of heroic speeches, serious incidents, war, and slaughter, with much ridicule and buffoonery. Angels and gods, virtues and vices, Christian religion, and Pagan mythology, are all frequently jumbled together. In short, they are plays like no other

dramatic compositions; full of the romantic and extravagant. At the same time, it is generally admitted, that in the works of Lopez de Vega, there are frequent marks of genius, and much force of imagination; many well-drawn characters; many happy situations; many striking and interesting surprises; and, from the source of his rich invention, the dramatic writers of other countries are said to have frequently drawn their materials. He himself apologises for the extreme irregularity of his composition, from the prevailing taste of his countrymen, who delighted in a variety of events, in strange and surprising adventures, and a labyrinth of intrigues, much more than in a natural and regularly conducted story.

THE general characters of the French comic theatre are, that it is correct, chaste, and decent. Several writers of considerable note it has produced, such as Regnard, Dufresny, Dancourt, and Marivaux; but the dramatic author in whom the French glory most, and whom they justly place at the head of all their comedians, is the famous Moliere. There is indeed no author, in all the fruitful and distinguished age of Louis XIV. who has attained a higher reputation than Moliere; or who has more nearly reached the summit of perfection in his own art, according to the judgment of all the French critics. Voltaire boldly pronounces him to be the most eminent comic poet of any age or country: nor, perhaps, is this the

decision of mere partiality; for, taking him upon the whole, I know none who deserves to be preferred to him. Moliere is always the satirist only of vice or folly. He has selected a great variety of ridiculous characters peculiar to the times in which he lived, and he has generally placed the ridicule justly. He possessed strong comic powers; he is full of mirth and pleasantry; and his pleasantry is always innocent. His comedies in verse, such as the Misanthrope and Tartuffe, are a kind of dignified comedy, in which vice is exposed, in the style of elegant and polite satire. In his prose comedies, though there is abundance of ridicule, yet there is never any thing found to offend a modest ear, or to throw contempt on sobriety and virtue. Together with those high qualities, Moliere has also some defects, which Voltaire, though his professed panegyrist, candidly admits. He is acknowledged not to be happy in the unravelling of his plots. Attentive more to the strong exhibition of characters than to the conduct of the intrigue, his unravelling is frequently brought on with too little preparation, and in an improbable manner. In his verse comedies, he is sometimes not sufficiently interesting, and too full of long speeches; and in his more risible pieces in prose, he is censured for being too farcical. Few writers, however, if any, ever possessed the spirit, or attained the true end of comedy, so perfectly, upon the whole, as Moliere. His *Tartuffe*, in

the style of grave comedy, and his *Avare*, in the gay, are accounted his two capital productions.

FROM the English theatre, we are naturally led to expect a greater variety of original characters in comedy, and bolder strokes of wit and humour, than are to be found in any other modern stage. Humour is, in a great measure, the peculiar province of the English nation. The nature of such a free government as ours; and that unrestrained liberty which our manners allow to every man, of living entirely after his own taste, afford full scope to the display of singularity of character, and to the indulgence of humour in all its forms. Whereas, in France, the influence of a despotic court, the more established subordination of ranks, and the universal observance of the forms of politeness and decorum, spread a much greater uniformity over the outward behaviour and characters of men. Hence comedy has a more ample field, and can flow with a much freer vein in Britain, than in France. But it is extremely unfortunate, that, together with the freedom and boldness of the comic spirit in Britain, there should have been joined such a spirit of indecency and licentiousness, as has disgraced English comedy beyond that of any nation, since the days of Aristophanes.

THE first age, however, of English comedy, was not infected by this spirit. Neither the plays of

Shakespeare, nor those of Ben Jonson, can be accused of immoral tendency. Shakespeare's general character, which I gave in the last Lecture, appears with as great advantage in his comedies, as in his tragedies; a strong, fertile, and creative genius, irregular in conduct, employed too often in amusing the mob, but singularly rich and happy in the description of characters and manners. Jonson is more regular in the conduct of his pieces, but stiff and pedantic; though not destitute of dramatic genius. In the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, much fancy and invention appear, and several beautiful passages may be found. But, in general, they abound with romantic and improbable incidents, with overcharged and unnatural characters, and with coarse and gross allusions. These comedies of the last age, by the change of public manners, and of the turn of conversation, since their time, are now become too obsolete to be very agreeable. For we must observe, that comedy, depending much on the prevailing modes of external behaviour, becomes sooner antiquated than any other species of writing; and, when antiquated, it seems harsh to us, and loses its power of pleasing. This is especially the case with respect to the comedies of our own country, where the change of manners is more sensible and striking, than in any foreign production. In our own country, the present mode of behaviour is always the standard of politeness; and whatever departs from it appears uncouth;

whereas in the writings of foreigners, we are less acquainted with any standard of this kind, and of course, are less hurt by the want of it. Plautus appeared more antiquated to the Romans, in the age of Augustus, than he does now to us. It is a high proof of Shakespeare's uncommon genius, that, notwithstanding these disadvantages, his character of Falstaff is to this day admired, and his "Merry Wives of Windsor" read with pleasure.

It was not till the æra of the Restoration of King Charles II. that the licentiousness which was observed, at that period, to infect the court, and the nation in general, seized, in a peculiar manner, upon comedy as its province, and, for almost a whole century, retained possession of it. It was then first, that the rake became the predominant character, and, with some exceptions, the hero of every comedy. The ridicule was thrown, not upon vice and folly, but much more commonly upon chastity and sobriety. At the end of the play, indeed, the rake is commonly, in appearance, reformed, and professes that he is to become a sober man; but throughout the play, he is set up as the model of a fine gentleman; and the agreeable impression made by a sort of sprightly licentiousness, is left upon the imagination, as a picture of the pleasurable enjoyment of life; while the reformation passes slightly away, as a matter of mere form. To what sort of moral conduct such public entertainments as these tend to form

the youth of both sexes, may be easily imagined. Yet this has been the spirit which has prevailed upon the comic stage of Great Britain, not only during the reign of Charles II. but throughout the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, and down to the days of King George II.

DRYDEN was the first considerable dramatic writer after the Restoration, in whose comedies, as in all his works, there are found many strokes of genius, mixed with great carelessness, and visible marks of hasty composition. As he sought to please only, he went along with the manners of the times; and has carried through all his comedies that vein of dissolute licentiousness, which was then fashionable. In some of them, the indecency was so gross as to occasion, even in that age, a prohibition of being brought upon the stage.*

SINCE his time, the writers of comedy, of greatest note, have been Cibber, Vanburgh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Cibber has written a great many

---

* "The mirth which he excites in comedy will, perhaps, be "found not so much to arise from any original humour, or pe- "culiarity of character, nicely distinguished, and diligently pur- "sued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and sur- "prises, from jest of action, rather than sentiment. What he "had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had, not from "nature, but from other poets; if not always a plagiary, yet, at "least, an imitator." JOHNSON's Life of Dryden.

comedies; and though, in several of them, there be much sprightliness, and a certain pert vivacity peculiar to him, yet they are so forced and unnatural in the incidents, as to have generally sunk into obscurity, except two, which have always continued in high favour with the public, "The "Careless Husband," and "The Provoked Hus- "band." The former is remarkable for the polite and easy turn of the dialogue; and, with the exception of one indelicate scene, is tolerably moral too in the conduct, and in the tendency. The latter, "The Provoked Husband," (which was the joint production of Vanburgh and Cibber,) is, perhaps, on the whole, the best comedy in the English language. It is liable, indeed, to one critical objection, of having a double plot: as the incidents of the Wronghead family, and those of Lord Townley's, are separate and independent of each other. But this irregularity is compensated by the natural characters, the fine painting, and the happy strokes of humour with which it abounds. We are, indeed, surprised to find so unexceptionable a comedy proceeding from two such loose authors; for, in its general strain, it is calculated to expose licentiousness and folly; and would do honour to any stage.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH has spirit, wit, and ease; but he is, to the last degree, gross and indelicate. He is one of the most immoral of all our comedians. His "Provoked Wife," is full of such

indecent sentiments and allusions, as ought to explode it out of all reputable society. His "Relapse" is equally censurable; and these are his only two considerable pieces. Congreve is, unquestionably, a writer of genius. He is lively, witty, and sparkling; full of character, and full of action. His chief fault as a comic writer is, that he overflows with wit. It is often introduced unseasonably: and, almost every where, there is too great a proportion of it for natural well-bred conversation *. Farquhar is a light and gay writer; less correct, and less sparkling than Congreve; but he has more ease, and, perhaps, fully as great a share of the vis comica. The two best, and least exceptionable of his plays, are the "Recruiting Officer," " and the "Beaux Stratagem." I say the least exceptionable; for, in general, the tendency of both Congreve and Farquhar's plays is immoral. Throughout them all, the rake, the loose intrigue and the life of licentiousness, are the objects continually held up to view; as if the assemblies of a great and polished nation could be amused with none but vicious objects. The indelicacy of these writers, in the female characters which they introduce, is particulary remarkable. Nothing can

* Dr. Johnson says of him, in his Life, that "his personages "are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward "or to strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his "wit is a meteor, playing to and fro, with alternate corruscations."

be more awkward than their representations of a woman of virtue and honour. Indeed, there are hardly any female characters in their plays except two; women of loose principles, or when a virtuous character is attempted to be drawn, women of affected manners.

THE censure which I have now passed upon these celebrated comedians, is far from being overstrained or severe. Accustomed to the indelicacy of our own comedy, and amused with the wit and humour of it, its immorality too easily escapes our observation. But all foreigners, the French especially, who are accustomed to a better regulated and more decent stage, speak of it with surprise and astonishment. Voltaire, who is, assuredly, none of the most austere moralists, plumes himself not a little upon the superior *bienseance* of the French theatre; and says, that the language of English comedy is the language of debauchery, not of politeness. M. Moralt, in his Letters upon the French and English nations, ascribes the corruption of manners in London to comedy, as its chief cause. Their comedy, he says, is like that of no other country; it is the school in which the youth of both sexes familiarise themselves with vice, which is never represented there as vice, but as mere gaiety. As for comedies, says the ingenious M. Diderot, in his observations upon dramatic poetry, the English have none; they have, in their place, satires, full indeed of gaiety and

force, but without morals, and without taste; *sans mœurs et sans gout.* There is no wonder, therefore, that Lord Kaimes, in his Elements of Criticism, should have expressed himself, upon this subject of the indelicacy of English comedy, in terms much stronger than any that I have used; concluding his invective against it in these words: "How "odious ought those writers to be, who thus "spread infection through their native country; "employing the talents which they have received "from their Maker most traitorously against himself, by endeavouring to corrupt and disfigure "his creatures. If the comedies of Congreve did "not rack him with remorse in his last moments, "he must have been lost to all sense of virtue." Vol. II. 479.

I AM happy, however, to have it in my power to observe, that, of late years, a sensible reformation has begun to take place in English comedy. We have, at last, become ashamed of making our public entertainments rest wholly upon profligate characters and scenes; and our later comedies, of any reputation, are much purified from the licentiousness of former times. If they have not the spirit, the ease, and the wit of Congreve and Farquhar, in which respect they must be confessed to be somewhat deficient; this praise, however, they justly merit, of being innocent and moral.

FOR this reformation, we, are, questionless, much indebted to the French theatre, which has not only been, at all times, more chaste and inoffensive than ours, but has, within these few years, produced a species of comedy, of still a graver turn than any that I have yet mentioned. This, which is called the serious, or tender comedy, and was termed by its opposers, *La Comedie Larmoyante*, is not altogether a modern invention. Several of Terence's plays, as the Andria, in particular, partake of this character; and as we know that Terence copied Menander, we have sufficient reason to believe that his comedies, also, were of the same kind. The nature of this composition does not by any means exclude gaiety and ridicule: but it lays the chief stress upon tender and interesting situations; it aims at being sentimental, and touching the heart by means of the capital incidents; it makes our pleasure arise, not so much from the laughter which it excites, as from the tears of affection and joy which it draws forth.

IN English, Steele's Conscious Lovers is a comedy which approaches to this character, and it has always been favourably received by the public. In French, there are several dramatic compositions of this kind, which possess considerable merit and reputation, such as the "Melanide," and "Prejugé à la Mode," of La Chaussée; the "Père de Famille," of Diderot; the "Cénie," of

Mad. Graffigny; and the "Nanine," and "L'En-" fant Prodigue," of Voltaire.

WHEN this form of comedy first appeared in France, it excited a great controversy among the critics. It was objected to as a dangerous and unjustifiable innovation in composition. It is not comedy, said they, for it is not founded on laugh ter and ridicule. It is not tragedy, for it does not involve us in sorrow. By what name then can it be called? or what pretensions hath it to be comprehended under dramatic writing? But this was trifling, in the most egregious manner, with critical names and distinctions, as if these had invariably fixed the essence, and ascertained the limits of every sort of composition. Assuredly, it is not necessary that all comedies should be formed on one precise model. Some may be entirely light and gay; others may be more serious; some may be of a mixed nature; and all of them, properly executed, may furnish agreeable and useful entertainment to the public, by suiting the different tastes of men*. Serious and tender comedy has no title to claim to itself the possession of the

* "Il y a beaucoup de très bonnes pièces, où il ne regne que "de la gayeté: d'autres toutes sérieuses; d'autres melangées; "d'autres, où l'attendrissement va jusq'aux larmes. Il ne faut "donner exclusion à aucune genre; et si l'on me demandoit, quel "genre est le meilleur? Je repondrois, celui qui est le mieux "traité." VOLTAIRE.

stage, to the exclusion of ridicule and gaiety. But when it retains only its proper place, without usurping the province of any other; when it is carried on with resemblance to real life, and without introducing romantic and unnatural situations, it may certainly prove both an interesting and an agreeable species of dramatic writing. If it become insipid and drawling, this must be imputed to the fault of the author, not to the nature of the composition, which may admit much liveliness and vivacity.

In general, whatever form comedy assumes, whether gay or serious, it may always be esteemed a mark of society advancing in true politeness, when those theatrical exhibitions, which are designed for public amusement, are cleared from indelicate sentiment, or immoral tendency. Though the licentious buffoonery of Aristophanes amused the Greeks for a while, they advanced, by degrees, to a chaster and juster taste; and the like progress of refinement may be concluded to take place among us, when the public receive with favour, dramatic compositions of such a strain and spirit, as entertained the Greeks and Romans, in the days of Menander and Terence.

INDEX.

TO THE

THREE VOLUMES.

☞ The *Numeral Letters* refer to the *Volume*; and the *Figures* to the *Pages*.

A

ACCENTS, thrown farther back from the termination in the English than in any other language, i. 206. Seldom more than one in English words, ii. 404. Govern the measure of English verse, iii. 98.

Achilles, his character in the Iliad, examined, iii. 225.

Action, much used to assist language in an imperfect state, i. 122. And by ancient orators and players, 126. Fundamental rule of propriety in, ii. 419. Cautions with respect to, *Ibid.* In epic poetry, the requisites of, iii. 197.

Acts, the division of a play into five, an arbitrary limitation, iii. 287. These pauses in representations ought to fall properly, 289.

Adam, his character in Milton's Paradise Lost, iii. 268.

Addison, general view of his Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, i. 50. His invocation of the Muse in his Campaign, censured, 88. Blemishes in his style, 244, 246, 264. Ease and perspicuity of, 272, 274, 279. His beautiful description of light and colours, 336. Instance of his use of mixed metaphor, 359. Improper use of similies, 401. His general character as a writer, ii. 37. Character of his spectator, 54. Critical examination of some of those papers, 56. Remarks on his criticism of Tasso's Aminta, iii. 125, *note*. His tragedy of Cato critically examined, 283, 300. 309, 314.

Adjectives, common to all languages, i. 181. How they came to be classed with nouns, 182.

Adverbs, their nature and use defined, i. 192. Importance of their position in a sentence illustrated, 243.

Æneid of Virgil, critical examination of that poem, iii. 233. The subjects, 234. Action, 235. Is deficient in characters, *Ibid.* Distribution and management of the subject, 237. Abounds with awful and tender scenes, 239. The descent of Æneas into hell, 240. The poem left unfinished by Virgil, 237, 241.

Æschines, a comparison between him and Demosthenes, ii. 183.

Æschylus, his character as a tragic writer, iii. 317.

Ætna, remarks on Virgil's description of that mountain, i. 83. And on that by Sir Richard Blackmore, 84.

Affectation, the disadvantages of, in public speaking, ii. 422,

Ages, four, peculiarly fruitful in learned men, pointed out, iii. 3.

Akenside, his comparison between sublimity in natural and moral objects, i. 61. *note.* Instance of his happy allusion to figures, 335. Character of his Pleasures of the Imagination, iii. 143.

Alphabet of letters, the considerations which led to the invention of, i. 150. Remote obscurity of this invention, 152. The alphabets of different nations derived from one common source, 153.

Allegory, explained, i. 364. Anciently a favourite method of conveying instructions, 366. Allegorical personages improper agents in epic poetry, iii. 213, 264.

Ambiguity in style, whence it proceeds, i. 243.

Amplification in speech, what, i. 418. Its principal instrument, *ibid.*

American languages, the figurative style of, i. 131, 329.

Anagnorisis, in ancient tragedy, explained, iii. 292.

Annals, and history, the distinction beween, iii. 49.

Ancients and moderns distinguished, iii. 4. The merits of ancient writers are now finally ascertained, 5. The progress of knowledge favourable to the moderns in forming a comparison between them, 8. In philosophy and history, 9. The efforts of genius greater among the ancients, 10. A mediocrity of genius now more diffused, 13.

Antithesis in language explained, i. 408. The too frequent use of, censured, 409.

Apostrophe, the nature of this figure explained, i. 390. Fine one from Cicero, ii. 225, *note.*

Arabian Night's Entertainments, a character of those tales, iii. 72.

Arabian poetry, its character, iii. 89.
Arbuthnot, character of his epistolary writing, iii. 66.
Architecture, sublimity in, whence it arises, i. 59. The sources of beauty in, 101.
Arguments, the proper management of, in a discourse, iii. 369. Analytic and synthetic methods, 373. Arrangement of, 375. Are not to be too much multiplied, 379.
Ariosto, character of his Orlando Furioso, iii. 74, 254.
Aristotle, his rules for dramatic and epic compositions, whence derived, i. 42. His definition of a sentence, 237. His extended sense of the term metaphor, 344. Character of his style, ii. 12, 21. His institutions of rhetoric, 179. His definition of tragedy considered, iii. 275. His observations on tragic characters, 304.
Aristophanes, character of his comedies, iii. 341.
Arithmetical figures, universal characters, i. 150.
Ark of the covenant, choral service performed in the procession of bringing it back to Mount Sion, iii. 170.
Armstrong, character of his Art of preserving Health, iii. 143.
Art, works of, considered as a source of beauty, i. 100.
Articles, in language, the use of, i. 165. Their importance in the English language illustrated, *ibid.*
Articulation, clearness of, necessary in public speaking, ii. 404.
Associations, academical recommended, ii. 441. Instructions for the regulation of, 442.
Athenians, ancient, character of, ii. 171. Eloquence of, 172.
Atterbury, a more harmonious writer than Tillotson, i. 307. Critical examination of one of his sermons, ii. 309. His exordium to a 30th of January sermon, 352.
Attici and Asiani, parties at Rome, account of, ii. 193.
Authors, petty, why no friends to criticism, i. 43. Why the most ancient afford the most striking instances of sublimity, 69. Must write with purity to gain esteem. 210.

B

Bacon, his observations on romances, iii. 71.
Ballads, have great influence over the manners of a people, iii. 70. Were the first vehicles of historical knowledge and instruction, 86.
Bar, the eloquence of, defined, ii. 164. Why more confined than the pleadings before ancient tribunals, 209. Distinction between the motives of pleading at the bar, and speaking in popular assemblies, 245. In what respects ancient pleadings differ from those of modern times, 247. Instructions for pleaders, 250, 363.
Bards, ancient, the first founders of law and civilization, iii. 86.

Barrow, Dr. character of his style, ii. 16. Character of his sermons, 304.

Beaumont and Fletcher, their characters as dramatic poets, iii. 349.

Beauty, the emotion raised by, distinguished from that of sublimity, i. 92. Is a term of vague application, *ibid.* Colours, 94. Figure, *ibid.* Hogarth's line of beauty, and line of grace, considered, 96. Motion, 97. A landscape the most complete assemblage of beautiful objects, 99. The human countenance, *ibid.* Works of art, 100. The influence of fitness and design in our ideas of beauty, 101. Beauty in literary composition, 103. Novelty, 104. Imitation, 105.

Bergerus, a German critic, writes a treatise on the sublimity of Cæsar's Commentaries, i. 66.

Berkley, bishop, character of his dialogues on the Existence of Matter, iii. 62

Biography, as a class of historical composition, characterised, iii. 51.

Blackmore, Sir Richard, remarks on his description of Mount Ætna, i. 84.

Blackwall, his character as a writer, ii. 41.

Boileau, his character as a didactic poet, iii. 148.

Bolingbroke, instances of inaccuracy in his style, i. 258, 283. A beautiful climax from, 277. A beautiful metaphor from, 345. His general character as a politician and philosopher, 347. His general character as a writer, ii. 43, 438.

Bombast in writing described, i. 89.

Bossu, his definition of an epic poem, iii. 191. His account of the composition of the Iliad, 192.

Bossuet, M. instances of apostrophes to personified objects, in his funeral orations, i. 339, *note*. Conclusion of his funeral oration on the prince of Condé, ii. 395.

Britain, Great, not eminent for the study of eloquence, ii. 204. Compared with France in this respect, 206.

Bruyere, his parallel between the eloquence of the pulpit and the bar, ii. 279, *note*.

Buchanan, his character as an historian, iii. 47.

Building how rendered sublime, i. 59.

C

Cadmus, account of his alphabet, i. 153.

Cæsar's Commentaries, the style of, characterised, i. 65. Is considered by *Bergerus* as a standard of sublime writing, 66.

Instance of his happy talent in historical painting, iii. 40. *note.* His character of Terence the dramatist, 344, *note.*

Camoens, critical examination of his Lusiad, iii. 255. Confused machinery of, 256.

Campbell, Dr. his observations on English particles, i. 179, *note.*

Carmel, Mount, metaphorical allusions to, in Hebrew poetry, iii. 176.

Casimir, his character as a lyric poet, iii. 135.

Catastrophe, the proper conduct of, in dramatic representations, iii. 291.

Caudinæ Furcæ, Livy's happy description of the disgrace of the Roman army there, iii. 37.

Celtic language, its antiquity and character, i. 196. The remains of it, where to be found, *ibid.* Poetry, its character, iii. 88.

Characters, the danger of labouring them too much in historical works, iii. 43. The due requisites of, in tragedy, 302.

Chinese language, character of, i. 124. And writing, 149.

Chivalry, origin of, iii. 72.

Chorus, ancient, described, iii. 278. Was the origin of tragedy, 279. Inconveniencies of, 281. How it might properly be introduced on the modern theatre, 283.

Chronology, a due attention to, necessary in historical compositions, iii. 25.

Chrysostom, St. his oratorial character, ii. 202.

Cibber, his character as a dramatic writer, iii. 351.

Cicero, his ideas of taste, i. 20. *note.* His distinction between *amare* and *diligere,* 227. His observations on style, 240. Very attentive to the beauties of climax, 277. Is the most harmonious of all writers, 291. His remarks on the power of music in orations, 296. His attention to harmony too visible, 306. Instance of his happy talent of adapting sound to sense, 308. His account of the origin of figurative language, 328. His observations on suiting language to the subject, 349. His rule for the use of metaphor, 352. Instance of antithesis in, 409. The figure of speech, called vision, 452. His caution against bestowing profuse ornament on an oration, ii. 4. His distinctions of style, 10. His own character as a writer, 12. His character of the Grecian orators, 175. His own character as an orator, 190. Compared with Demosthenes, 194. Masterly apostrophe in, 225, *note.* His method of studying the judicial causes he undertook to plead, 251. State of the prosecution of Avitus Cluentius, 260. Analysis of Cicero's oration for him, 261. The exordium to his second oration against Rullus, 346. His method of preparing introductions to his oration, 349. Ex-

celled in narration, 365. His defence of Milo, *ibid.* 378. Instance of the pathetic in his last oration against Verres, 390. Character of his treatise *De Oratore*, 445. Character of his Dialogues, iii. 60. His Epistles, 66.

Clarendon, Lord, remarks on his style, i. 254. His character as an historian, iii. 48.

Clarke, Dr. the style of his sermons characterised, ii. 303.

Classics, ancient, their merits not finally settled beyond controversy, iii. 5. The study of them recommended, 15.

Climax, a great beauty in composition, i. 276. In what it consists, 418.

Cluentius, Avitus, history of his prosecution, ii. 260. His cause undertaken by Cicero, *ibid.* Analysis of Cicero's oration for him, *ibid.*

Colours, considered as the foundation of beauty, i. 94.

Comedy, how distinguished from tragedy, iii. 272. 331. Rules for the conduct of 334. The characters in, ought to be of our own country, and of our own time, 335. Two kinds of, 336. Characters ought to be distinguished, 338. Style, 339. Rise and progress of comedy, 340. Spanish comedy, 345. French comedy, 346. English comedy, 348. Licentiousness of, from the æra of the Restoration, *ibid.* The reformation of, to what owing, 357. General remarks, 358.

Comparison, distinguished from metaphor, i. 342. The nature of this figure explained, 397.

Composition. See *Literary* composition.

Congreve, the plot of his Mourning Bride embarrassed, iii. 287. General character of his tragedy, 331. His comedies, 353.

Conjugation of verbs, the varieties of, i. 187.

Conviction, distinguished from persuasion, ii. 162.

Copulatives, cautions for the use of them, i. 265.

Corneille, his character as a tragic writer, iii. 322.

Couplets, the first introduction of, into English poetry, iii. 135.

Cowley, instances of forced metaphors in his poems, i. 352. His use of similes censured, 405. His general character as a poet, iii. 136.

Crevier, his character of several eminent French writers, ii. 436. *note.*

Criticism, true and pedantic, distinguished, i. 10. Its object, 41. Its origin, 42. Why complained of by petty authors, 43. May sometimes decide against the voice of the public, 44.

Cyphers, or arithmetical figures, a kind of universal character, i. 150.

D

David, king, his magnificent institutions for the cultivation of sacred music and poetry, iii. 168. His character as a poet, 185.

Debate in popular assemblies, the eloquence of, defined, ii. 164. More particularly considered, 215. Rules for, 216.

Declamation, unsupported by sound reasoning, false eloquence, ii. 215.

Declension of nouns considered in various languages, i. 172. Whether cases or prepositions were most anciently used, 174. Which of them are most useful and beautiful, 176.

Deities, heathen, probable cause of the number of, i. 376.

Deliberative orations, what, ii. 212.

Delivery, the importance of in public speaking, ii. 228. 397. The four chief requisites in, 400. The powers of voice, *ibid.* Articulation, 402. Pronunciation, 404. Emphasis, 405. Pauses, 408. Declamatory delivery, 417. Action, 418. Affectation, 422.

Demetrius Phalerius, the rhetorician, his character, ii. 185.

Demonstrative orations, what, ii. 212.

Demosthenes, his eloquence characterised, ii. 172. His expedients to surmount the disadvantages of his person and address, 181. His opposition to Philip of Macedon, 182. His rivalship with Eschines, 183. His style and action, 184. Compared with Cicero, 194, Why his orations still please in perusal, 216. Extracts from his Philippics, 231. His definition of the several points of oratory, 397.

Description, the great test of a poet's imagination, iii. 149. Selection of circumstances, 150. Inanimate objects should be enlivened, 156. Choice of epithets, 160.

Description and imitation, the distinction between, i. 108.

Des Brosses, his speculations on the expressive power of radical letters and syllables, i. 119, *note.*

Dialogue writing, the properties of, iii. 57. Is very difficult to execute, 58. Modern dialogues characterised, *ibid.*

Didactic poetry, its nature explained, iii. 137. The most celebrated productions in this class specified, 138. Rules for compositions of this kind, *ibid.* Proper embellishments of, 141.

Diderot, M. his character of English comedy, iii. 356.

Dido, her character in the Æneid examined, iii. 236.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, his ideas of excellency in a sentence, i. 293. His distinctions of style, ii. 9. Character of his treatise on Grecian oratory, 178. His comparison between Lysias and Isocrates, 179, *note.* His criticism on Thucydides, iii. 24.

Discourse. See *Oration.*

Dramatic poetry, the origin of, iii. 91. Distinguished by its objects, 272. See *Tragedy* and *Comedy.*

Dryden, one of the first reformers of our style, ii. 19. Johnson's character of his prose style, 20, *note*. His character as a poet, iii. 106. His character of Shakespeare, 326, *note*. His own character as a dramatic writer, 329. 351.

Du Bos, Abbé, his remark on the theatrical compositions of the ancients, i. 294.

E

Education, liberal, an essential requisite for eloquence, ii. 402.

Egypt, the style of the hieroglyphical writing of, i. 147. This an early stage of the art of writing, *ibid*. The alphabet probably invented in that country, 153.

Emphasis, its importance in public speaking, ii. 405. Rule for, 407.

Eloquence, the several objects of consideration under this head, ii. 159. Definition of the term, 160. Fundamental maxims of the art, 161. Defended against the objection of the abuse of the art of persuasion, 162. Three kinds of eloquence distinguished, *ibid*. Oratory, the highest degree of, the offspring of passion, 164. Requisites for eloquence, 167. French eloquence, 168. Grecian, 170. Rise and character of the rhetoricians of Greece, 173. Roman, 187. The Attici and Asiani, 193. Comparisons between Cicero and Demosthenes, 194. The schools of the declaimers, 200. The eloquence of the primitive fathers of the church, 202. General remarks on modern eloquence, 203. Parliament, 209. The bar, *ibid*, and pulpit, 210. The three kinds of orations distinguished by the ancients, 212. These distinctions how far correspondent with those made at present, 213. Eloquence of popular assemblies considered, 214. The foundation of eloquence, 215. The danger of trusting to prepared speeches at public meetings, 218. Necessary premeditation pointed out, 219. Method, 220. Style and expression, 221. Impetuosity, 223. Attention to decorums, 226. Delivery, 228. 397. Summary, 229. See *Cicero, Demosthenes, Oration*, and *Pulpit*.

English language, the arrangements of words in, more refined than that of ancient languages, i. 139. But more limited, 140. The principles of general grammar seldom applied to it, 159. The important use of articles in, 165. All substantive nouns of inanimate objects, of the neuter gender, 168. The place of declension in, supplied by prepositions 174. The various tenses of English verbs, 187. Historical view of the English language, 196. The Celtic the primitive language of Britain, 197. The Teutonic tongue the

basis of our present speech, 198. Its irregularities accounted for, 199. Its copiousness, 200. Compared with the French language, 201. Its style characterised, 202. Its flexibility, 204. Is more harmonious than is generally allowed, *ibid.* Is rather strong than graceful, 205. Accent thrown farther back in English words than in those of any other language, *ibid.* General properties of the English tongue, 206. Why so loosely and inaccurately written, 207. The fundamental rules of Syntax, common to both the English and Latin, 209. No author can gain esteem if he does not write with purity, 210. Grammatical authors recommended, 211, *note.*

Epic poetry, the standards of, iii. 14. Is the highest effort of poetical genius, 190. The characters, obscured by critics, 191. Examination of Bossu's account of the formation of the Iliad, *ibid.* Epic poetry considered as to its moral tendency, 195. Predominant character of, 197. Action of, 198. Episodes, 199. The subject should be of remote date, 203. Modern history more proper for dramatic writing than for epic poetry, 204. The story must be interesting and skilfully managed, 205. The intrigue, *ibid.* The question considered, whether it ought to end successfully, 206. Duration of the action, 207. Characters of the personages, 208. The principal hero, 209. The machinery, 210. Narration, 213. Loose observations, 214.

Episode, defined with reference to epic poetry, iii. 199. Rules for conduct of, 201.

Epistolary writing, general remarks on, iii. 62.

Eve, her character in Milton's Paradise Lost, iii. 268.

Euripides, instance of his excellence in the pathetic, iii. 313, *note.* His character as a tragic writer, 318.

Exclamations, the proper use of, i. 413. Mode of their operation, *ibid.* Rule for the employment of, 414.

Exercise improves both bodily and mental powers, i. 22.

Exordium of a discourse, the objects of, ii. 343. Rules for the composition of, 347.

Explication of the subject of a sermon, observation on, ii. 367.

F

Face, human, the beauty of, complex, i. 99.

Farquhar, his character, as a dramatic writer, iii. 353.

Fathers, Latin, character of their style of eloquence, ii. 202.

Fenelon, archbishop, his parallel between Demosthenes and Cicero, ii. 197. His remarks on the composition of a sermon, 358. Critical examination of his Adventures of Telemachus, iii. 259.

Fielding, a character of his novels, iii. 77.

Figurative style of language defined, i. 316. Is not a scholastic invention, but a natural effusion of imagination, 318. How described by rhetoricians, 319. Will not render a cold or empty composition interesting, 322. The pathetic and sublime reject figures of speech, 324. Origin of, *ibid.* How they contribute to the beauty of style, 330. Illustrate description, 333. Heighten emotions, 344. The rhetorical names and classes of figures frivolous, 337. The beauties of composition not dependent on tropes and figures, ii. 1. Figures must always rise naturally from the subject, 2. Are not to be profusely used, 4. The talent of using derived from nature, and not to be created, 6. If improperly introduced, are a deformity, 5, *note.* See *Metaphor.*

Figure, considered as a source of beauty, i. 194.

Figures of speech, the origin of, 129.

Figures of thought, among rhetoricians, defined, i. 320.

Fitness and design, considered as sources of beauty, i. 101.

Fleece, a poem, a harmonious passage from, i. 313.

Fontenelle, character of his Dialogues, iii. 61.

French, Norman, when introduced into England, i. 197.

French writers, general remarks on their style, ii. 15. Eloquence, 168, 203. French and English oratory compared, 206.

Frigidity in writing characterised, i. 89.

G

Gay, a character of his pastorals, iii. 124.

Gender of nouns, foundation of, i. 167.

Genius distinguished from taste, i. 46. Its import, 47. Includes taste, 48. The pleasures of the imagination, a striking testimony of Divine benevolence, 51. True, is nursed by liberty, ii. 167. In arts and writing, why displayed more in one age than in another, iii. 2. Was more vigorous in the ancients, than in the moderns, 10. A general mediocrity of, now diffused, 13.

Gesner, a character of his Idylls, iii. 123.

Gestures, in public oratory. See *Action.*

Gil Blas, of Le Sage, character of that novel, iii. 76.

Girard, Abbé, character of his *Synonymes François,* i. 234, *note.*

Gordon, instances of his unnatural disposition of words, i. 272.

Gorgias of Leontium, the rhetorician, his character, ii. 175.

Gothic poetry, its character, iii. 88.

Gracchus, C. his declamations regulated by musical rules, i. 295.

Grammar, general, the principles of, little attended to by

writers, i. 158. The division of the several parts of speech, 159. Nouns substantive, 161. Articles, 163. Number, gender, and case of nouns, 166. Prepositions, 174. Pronouns, 179. Adjectives, 181. Verbs, 184. Verbs, the most artificial and complex of all the parts of speech, 189. Adverbs, 192. Prepositions and conjunctions, 193. Importance of the study of grammar, 195.

Grandeur. See *Sublimity.*

Greece, short account of the ancient republics of, ii. 170. Eloquence carefully studied there, 172. Characters of the distinguished orators of, 173. Rise and character of the rhetoricians, 175.

Greek, a musical language, i. 125, 294. Its flexibility, 203. Writers distinguished for simplicity, ii. 34.

Guarini, character of his *Pastor Fido,* iii. 125.

Guicciardini, his character as an historian, iii. 46.

H

Habakkuk, sublime representation of the Deity in, i. 70.

Harris, explanatory simile cited from, i. 399.

Hebrew Poetry, in what points of view to be considered, iii. 165. The ancient pronunciation of, lost, 166. Music and poetry early cultivated among the Hebrews, 167. Construction of Hebrew poetry, 168. Is distinguished by a concise, strong, figurative expression, 170. The metaphors employed in, suggested by the climate and nature of the land of Judea, 174, 180. Bold and sublime instances of personification in, 181. Book of Proverbs, 183. Lamentations of Jeremiah, *ibid.* Book of Job, 187.

Helen, her character in the Iliad examined, iii. 223.

Hell, the various descents into, given by epic poets, shew the gradual improvement of notions concerning a future state, iii. 260.

Henriade. See *Voltaire.*

Herodotus, his character as an historian, ii. 11, 14.

Heroism, sublime instances of, pointed out, i. 60.

Hervey, character of his style, ii. 28.

Hieroglyphics, the second stage of the art of writing, i. 145. Of Egypt, 147.

Historians, modern, their advantages over the ancient, iii. 10. Ancient models of, 14. The objects of their duty, 17. Character of Polybius, 21. Of Thucydides, 23. Of Herodotus and Thuanus, 25. Primary qualities necessary in a historian, 27. Character of Livy and Sallust, 29. Of Tacitus, 30. Instructions and cautions to historians, *ibid.* How to preserve the dignity of narration, 34. How to render it

interesting, 35. Danger of refining too much in drawing character, 43. Character of the Italian historians, 45. The French and English, 47.

History, the proper object and end of, iii. 17. True, the characters of, 18. The different classes of, 19. General History, the proper conduct of, 20. The necessary qualities of historical narration, 23. The propriety of introducing orations in history examined, 42. And characters, 42. The Italians the best modern historians, 45. See *Annals*, *Biography*, *Memoirs*, and *Novels*.

Hogarth, his analysis of beauty considered, i. 96.

Homer, not acquainted with poetry as a systematic art, i. 42. Did not possess a refined taste, 49. Instances of sublimity in, 71. Is remarkable for the use of personification, 381. Story of the Iliad, iii. 217. Remarks on, 218. His invention and judgment in the conduct of the poem, 220. Advantages and defects arising from his narrative speeches, 223. His characters, *ibid.* His machinery, 225. His style, 228. His skill in narrative description, 229. His similies, 230. General character of his Odyssey, 282. Defects of the Odyssey, 233. Compared with Virgil, 240.

Hooker, a specimen of his style, ii. 18.

Horace, figurative passages cited from, i. 332. Instance of mixed metaphor in, 359. Crowded metaphors, 361. His character as a poet, iii. 15, 134. Was the reformer of satire, 144.

Humour, why the English possess this quality more eminently than other nations, ii. 348.

Hyperbole, an explanation of that figure, i. 368. Cautions for the use of, 369. Two kinds of, 370.

I

Ideas, abstract, entered into the first formation of language, i. 163.

Jeremiah, his poetical character, iii. 186. See *Lamentations*.

Iliad, story of the, iii. 217. Remarks on, 218. The principal characters, 223. Machinery of, 225.

Imagination, the Pleasures of, as specified by Mr. Addison, i. 50. The powers of, to enlarge the sphere of our pleasures, a striking instance of Divine benevolence, 51. Is the source of figurative language, 318, 326.

Imitation, considered as a source of pleasure to taste, i. 105. And description distinguished, 108.

Inferences from a sermon, the proper management of, ii. 394.

Infinity of space, numbers, or duration, affect the mind with sublime ideas, i. 54.

Interjections the first elements of speech, i. 116.
Interrogations, instances of the happy use and effect of, i. 412. Mode of their operation, 414. Rule for using, *ibid.*
Job, exemplification of the sublimity of obscurity in the book of, i. 58. Remarks on the style of, iii. 167. The subject and poetry of, 187. Fine passage from, 188.
Johnson, his character of Dryden's prose style, ii. 20. *note.* His remarks on the style of Swift, 135. *note.* His character of Thomson, iii. 152. *note.* His character of Dryden's comedies, 376. *note.* His character of Congreve, *ibid. note.*
Jonson, Ben, his character as a dramatic poet, iii. 349.
Isæus, the rhetorician, his character, ii. 179.
Isaiah, sublime representation of the Deity in, i. 71. His description of the fall of the Assyrian empire, 393. His metaphors suited to the climate of Judea, iii. 175. 177. 178. His character as a poet, 186.
Isocrates, the rhetorician, his character, ii. 177.
Judea, remarks on the climate and natural circumstances of that country, iii. 174.
Judicial orations, what, ii. 212.
Juvenal, character of his satires, iii. 144.

K

Kaimes, lord, his severe censure of English comedies, iii. 356.
Knight errantry, foundation of the romances concerning, iii. 72.
Knowledge, an essential requisite for eloquence, ii. 432. The progress of, in favour of the moderns, upon a comparison with the ancients, iii. 8. The acquisition of, difficult in former ages, 11.

L

Lamentations of Jeremiah, the most perfect elegiac composition in the sacred scriptures, iii. 183.
Landscape considered as an assemblage of beautiful objects, i. 99.
Language, the improvement of, studied even by rude nations, i. 2. In what the true improvement of language consists, 3. Importance of the study of language, 4. Defined, 112. The present refinements of, 113. Origin and progress of, 115. The first elements of, 117. Analogy between words and things, 118. The great assistance afforded by gestures, 122. The Chinese language, 124. The Greek and Roman languages, 125. Action much used by ancient orators and players, 126. Roman pantomimes, 127. Great difference between ancient and modern pronunciation, 128. Figures of speech, the origin of, 129. Figurative

style of American languages, 131. Cause of the decline of figurative language, 134. The natural and original arrangement of words in speech, 136. The arrangement of words in modern languages, different from that of the ancients, 138. An exemplification, *ibid.* Summary of the foregoing observations, 143. Its wonderful powers, 335. All language strongly tinctured with metaphor, 343. In modern productions, often better than the subjects of them, ii. 157. Written and oral, distinction between, ii. 437. See *Grammar*, *Style*, and *Writing*.

Latin language, the pronunciation of, musical and gesticulating, i. 125. 294. The natural arrangement of words in, 137. The want of articles a defect in, 165. Remarks on the words deemed synonymous in, 227.

Learning, an essential requisite for eloquence, ii. 432.

Lebanon, metaphorical allusions to, in Hebrew poetry, iii. 176.

Lee, extravagant hyperbole quoted from, i. 371. His character as a tragic poet, iii. 329.

Liberty, the nurse of true genius, ii. 167.

Literary composition, importance of the study of language, preparatory to, i. 6. The beauties of, indefinite, 103. To what class the pleasures received from eloquence, poetry, and fine writing, are to be referred, 106. The beauties of, not dependent on tropes and figures, ii. 2. The different kinds of, distinguished, iii. 17. See *History*, *Poetry*, &c.

Livy, his character as an historian, iii. 29. 37.

Locke, general character of his style, ii. 23. The style of his Treatise on Human Understanding, compared with the writings of Lord Shaftsbury, iii. 57.

Longinus, strictures on his Treatise on the Sublime, i. 67. His account of the consequences of liberty, ii. 167. His sententious opinion of Homer's Odyssey, iii. 231.

Lopez de Vega, his character as a dramatic poet, iii. 345.

Love, too much importance and frequency allowed to, on the modern stage, iii. 306.

Louth's English Grammar recommended, i. 211. *note*. 266. *note*. His character of the prophet Ezekiel, iii. 186.

Lucan, instance of his destroying a sublime expression of Cæsar, by amplification, i. 76. Extravagant hyperbole from, 373. Critical examination of his Pharsalia, iii. 242. The subject, 243. Characters and conduct of the story, 244.

Lucian, character of his dialogues, iii, 67.

Lucretius, his sublime representation of the dominion of superstition over mankind, i. 58. *note*. The most admired passages in his Treatise *De Rerum Natura*, iii. 141.

Lusiad. See *Camoens*.

Lyric poetry, the peculiar character of, iii. 128. Four classes of odes, 130. Characters of the most eminent lyric poets, 133.
Lysias, the rhetorician, his character, ii. 179.

M

Machiavel, his character as an historian, iii. 45.
Machinery, the great use of, in epic poetry, iii. 210. Cautions for the use of, 212. 225.
Mackenzie, Sir George, instance of regular climax in his pleadings, i. 419.
Man, by nature both a poet and musician, iii. 84.
Marivaux, a character of his novels, iii. 76.
Marmontel, his comparative remarks on French, English, and Italian poetry, iii. 102. *note.*
Marsy, Fr. his contrast between the characters of Corneille and Racine, iii. 323. *note.*
Massillon, extract from a celebrated sermon of his, ii. 300. *note.* Encomium on, by Louis XIV. 307. His artful division of a text, 362.
Memoirs, their class in historical composition assigned, iii. 49. Why the French are fond of this kind of writing, 50.
Metalepsis, in figurative language, explained, i. 340.
Metaphor, in figurative style, explained, i. 341. 342. All language strongly tinctured with, 343. Approaches the nearest to painting, of all the figures of speech, 345. Rules to be observed in the conduct of, 347. See *Allegory.*
Metastasio, his character as a dramatic writer, iii. 325.
Metonomy, in figurative style, explained, i. 344.
Mexico, historical pictures the records of that empire, i. 145.
Milo, narrative of the rencounter between him and Clodius, by Cicero, ii. 365.
Milton, instances of sublimity in, i. 56. 79. 82. Of harmony, 291. 311. Hyperbolical sentiments of Satan in, 371. Striking instances of personification in, 382, 383, 385. Excellence of his descriptive poetry, iii. 154. Who the proper hero of his Paradise Lost, 209. Critical examination of this poem, 265. His sublimity characterised, 269. His language and versification, 270.
Moderns. See *Ancients.*
Moliere, his character as a dramatic poet, iii. 346.
Monboddo, lord, his observations on English and Latin verse, iii. 98. *note.*
Monotony in language, often the result of too great attention to musical arrangement, i. 304.

Montague, lady Mary Wortley, a character of her epistolary style, iii. 69.
Montesquieu, character of his style, ii. 12.
Monumental inscriptions, the numbers suited to the style, i. 316.
Moralt, M. his severe censure of English comedy, iii. 354.
More, Dr Henry, character of his Divine Dialogues, iii. 61.
Motion, considered as a source of beauty, i. 97.
Motte, M. de la, his observations on lyric poetry, iii. 132. *note*. Remarks on his criticism on Homer, 231. *note*.
Music, its influence on the passions, iii. 84. Its union with poetry, 85. Their separation injurious to each, 93.

N

Naïveté import of that French term, ii. 33.
Narration, an important point in pleadings at the bar, ii. 363.
Night scenes, commonly sublime, i. 56.
Nomic melody of the Athenians, what, i. 295.
Novels, a species of writing not so insignificant as may be imagined, iii. 70. Might be employed for very useful purposes, *ibid.* Rise and progress of fictitious history, 72. Characters of the most celebrated romances and novels, 74.
Novelty considered as a source of beauty, i. 105.
Nouns, substantive, the foundation of all grammar, i. 161. Number, gender, and cases of, 166, 167.

O

Obscurity, not unfavourable to sublimity, i. 57. Of style, owing to indistinct conceptions, 215.
Ode, the nature of, defined, iii. 128. Four distinctions of, 130. Obscurity and irregularity, the great faults in, 131.
Odyssey, general character of, iii. 232. Defects of, 233.
Oedipus, an improper character for the stage, iii. 305.
Orators, ancient, declaimed in recitative, i. 126.
Orations, the three kinds of, distinguished by the ancients, ii. 212. The present distinctions of, 213. Those in popular assemblies considered, 214. Prepared speeches not to be trusted to, 218. Necessary degrees of premeditation, 219. Method, 220. Style and expression, 221. Impetuosity, 223. Attention to decorums, 226. Delivery, 228. 397. The several parts of a regular oration, 343. Introduction, *ibid.* Introduction to replies, 355. Introduction to sermons, 356. Division of a discourse, 358. Rules for dividing it, 360. Explication, 363. The argumentative part, 369. The pathetic, 380. The peroration, 393. Virtue necessary to the perfection of eloquence, 427. Description of a true orator, 430. Qualifications for, 432. The best ancient writers on

oratory, 443. iii. 14. The use made of orations by the ancient historians, 42. See *Eloquence.*

Oriental poetry, more characteristical of an age than of a country, iii. 88.

——— style of scripture language, i. 132.

Orlando Furioso, See *Ariosto.*

Ossian, instances of sublimity in his works, i. 74. Correct metaphors, 356. Confused mixture of metaphorical and plain language in, 357. Fine apostrophe in, 391. Delicate simile, 400. Lively descriptions in, iii. 160.

Otway, his character as a tragic poet, iii. 329.

P

Pantomime, an entertainment of Roman origin, i. 127.

Parables, eastern, their general vehicle for the conveyance of truth, iii. 180.

Paradise Lost, critical review of that poem, iii. 265. The characters in, 267. Sublimity of, 269. Language and versification, 270.

Parentheses, cautions for the use of them, i. 258.

Paris, his character in the Iliad, examined, iii. 224.

Parliament of Great Britain, why eloquence has never been so powerful an instrument in, as in the ancient popular assemblies of Greece and Rome, ii. 209.

Parnel, his character as a descriptive poet, iii. 153.

Particles, cautions for the use of them, i. 265. Ought never to close sentences, 281.

Passion, the source of oratory, ii. 164.

Passions, when and how to be addressed by orators, ii. 381. The orator must feel emotions before he can communicate them to others, 385. The language of, 388. Poets address themselves to the passions, iii. 80.

Pastoral poetry, inquiry into its origin, iii. 107. A threefold view of pastoral life, 110. Rules for pastoral writing, 111. Its scenery, 113. Characters, 116. Subjects, *ibid.* Comparative merits of ancient pastoral writers, 121. And of moderns, 122.

Pathetic, the proper management of, in a discourse, ii. 380. Fine instance of, from Cicero, 389.

Pauses, the due uses of, in public speaking, ii. 408. In poetry, 410. iii. 99.

Pericles, the first who brought eloquence to any degree of perfection, ii. 173. His general character, 174.

Period. See *Sentence.*

Personification, the peculiar advantages of the English language in, i. 170. Limitations of gender in, 171. Objec-

tions against the practice of, answered, 375. The disposition to animate the objects about us, natural to mankind, *ibid.* This disposition may account for the number of heathen divinities, 376. Three degrees of this figure, 377. Rules for the management of the highest degree of, 386. Caution for the use of, in prose compositions, 388. See *Apostrophe.*

Persius, a character of his Satires, iii. 144.

Perspicuity, essential to a good style, i. 214. Not merely a negative virtue, 215. The three qualities of, 216.

Persuasion, distinguished from conviction, ii. 161. Objection brought from the abuse of this art, answered, 162. Rules for, 214.

Peruvians, their method of transmitting their thoughts to each other, i. 148.

Petronius Arbiter, his address to the declaimers of his time, ii. 200.

Pharsalia. See *Lucan.*

Pherecydes of Scyros, the first prose writer, i. 133.

Philips, character of his pastorals, iii. 123.

Philosophers, modern, their superiority over the ancient, unquestionable, iii. 9.

Philosophy, the proper style of writing adapted to, iii. 54. Proper embellishments for, 55.

Pictures, the first essay toward writing, i. 145.

Pindar, his character as a lyric poet, iii. 134.

Pitcairn, Dr. extravagant hyperbole cited from, i. 374.

Plato, character of his dialogues, iii. 59.

Plautus, his character as a dramatic poet, iii. 343.

Pleaders at the bar, instructions to, ii. 249, 363.

Pliny's Letters, general character of, iii. 65.

Plutarch, his character as a biographer, iii. 51.

Poetry, in what sense descriptive, and in what imitative, i. 108. Is more ancient than prose, 132. Source of the pleasure we receive from the figurative style of, 382. Test of the merit of, 404. Whence the difficulty of reading poetry arises, ii. 410. Compared with oratory, 425. Epic, the standards of, iii. 14. Definition of poetry, 80. Is addressed to the imagination and the passions, *ibid.* Its origin, 82. In what sense older than prose, *ibid.* Its union with music, 85. Ancient history and instruction first conveyed in poetry, *ibid.* Oriental, more characteristical of an age than of a country, 88. Gothic, Celtic, and Grecian, *ibid.* Origin of the different kinds of, 90. Was more vigorous in its first rude essays than under refinement, 92. Was injured by the separation of music from it, 93. Metrical feet, invention of, 96.

These measures not applicable to English poetry, 97. English heroic verse, the structure of, 99. French poetry, *ibid.* Rhyme and blank verse compared, 101. Progress of English versification, 105. Pastorals, 107. Lyrics, 128. Didactic poetry, 137. Descriptive poetry, 148. Hebrew poetry, 165. Epic poetry, 190. Poetic characters, two kinds of, 208. Dramatic poetry, 272.

Pointing, cannot correct a confused sentence, i. 258.

Politics, the science of, why ill understood among the ancients, iii. 28.

Polybius, his character as an historian, iii. 21.

Pope, criticism on a passage in his Homer, i. 78. Prose specimen from, consisting of short sentences, 240. Other specimens of his style, 273, 284. Confused mixtures of metaphorical and plain language in, 354. Mixed metaphor in, 360. Confused personification, 387. Instance of his fondness for antitheses, 411. Character of his epistolary writings, iii. 67. Criticism on, 68. Construction of his verse, 100. Peculiar character of his versification, 106. His pastorals, 118, 123. His ethic epistles, 146. The merits of his various poems examined, *ibid.* Character of his translation of Homer, 228.

Precision in language, in what it consists, i. 219. The importance of, 242. Requisites to, 234.

Prepositions, whether more ancient than the declension of nouns by cases, i. 174. Whether more useful than beautiful, 176. Dr. Campbell's observations on, 179. *note.* Their great use in speech, 193.

Prior, allegory cited from, i. 365.

Pronouns, their use, varieties, and cases, i. 179. Relative instances, illustrating the importance of their proper position in a sentence, 246.

Pronunciation, distinctness of, necessary in public speaking, ii. 403. Tones of, 414.

Proverbs, book of, a didactic poem, iii. 183.

Psalm xviii. sublime representation of the Deity in, i. 70. lxxxth, a fine allegory from, 365. Remarks on the poetic construction of the Psalms, ii. 169. 177.

Pulpit, the eloquence of, defined, ii. 165. English and French sermons compared, 206. The practice of reading sermons in England disadvantageous to oratory, 210. The art of persuasion resigned to the Puritans, *ibid.* Advantages and disadvantages of pulpit eloquence, 277. Rules for preaching, 281. The chief characteristics of pulpit eloquence, 284. Whether it is best to read sermons, or deliver them extempore, 296. Pronunciation, 297. Remarks on French sermons, 298. Cause of the dry argumentative style of English sermons, 301. General obervations, 305.

Pisistratus, the first who cultivated the arts of speech, ii. 173.

Q

Quinctilian, his ideas of taste, i. 20. *note.* His account of the ancient division of the several parts of speech, 160. *note.* His remarks on the importance of the study of grammar, 195. On perspicuity of style, 214, 226. On climax, 276. On the structure of sentences, 282. Which ought not to offend the ear, 288, 302. His caution against too great an attention to harmony, 304. His caution against mixed metaphor, 356. His fine apostrophe on the death of his son, 391. His rule for the use of similies, 406. His directions for the use of figures of style, ii. 5. His distinctions of style, 9, 26. His instructions for good writing, 46, 47. His character of Cicero's oratory, 192. His instructions to public speakers for preserving decorum, 226. His instructions to judicial pleaders, 251. His observations on exordiums to replies in debate, 355. On the proper division of an oration, 358. His mode of addressing the passions, 386. His lively representation of the effects of depravity, 428. Is the best ancient writer on oratory, 445.

R

Racine, his character as a tragic poet, iii. 322.
Ramsay, Allan, character of his *Gentle Shepherd*, iii. 127.
Rapin, P. remarks on his parallels between Greek and Roman writers, ii. 196.
Retz, cardinal de, character of his memoirs, iii. 50.
Rhetoricians, Grecian, rise and character of, ii. 175.
Rhyme, in English verse, unfavourable to sublimity, i. 77. And blank verse compared, iii. 103. The former, why improper in the Greek and Latin languages, 104. The first introduction of couplets in English poetry, 105.
Richardson, a character of his novels, iii. 77.
Ridicule, an instrument often misapplied, iii. 333.
Robinson Crusoe, character of that novel, iii. 77.
Romance, derivation of the term, iii. 73. See *Novels.*
Romans, derived their learning from Greece, ii. 187. Comparison between them and the Greeks, 188. Historical view of their eloquence, 189. Oratorical character of Cicero, 191. Æra of the decline of eloquence among, 198.
Rousseau, Jean Baptiste, his character as a lyric poet, iii. 136.
Rowe, his character as a tragic poet, iii. 329.

S

Sallust, his character as an historian, iii. 29.
Sannazarius, his piscatory eclogues, iii. 122.

Satan, examination of his character in Milton's Paradise Lost, iii. 265.
Satire, poetical, general remarks on the style of, iii. 143.
Saxon language, how established in England, i. 197.
Scenes, dramatic, what, and the proper conduct of, iii. 295.
Scriptures, sacred, the figurative style of, remarked, i. 123. The translators of, happy in suiting their numbers to the subject, 309. Fine apostrophe in, 393. Present us with the most ancient monuments of poetry extant, iii. 165. The diversity of style in the several books of, 166. The Psalms of David, 169. No other writings abound with such bold and animated figures, 173. Parables, 180. Bold and sublime instances of personification in, 181. Book of Proverbs, 183. Lamentations of Jeremiah, *ibid.*
Scuderi, madam, her romances, iii. 75.
Seneca, his frequent antitheses censured, i. 410. Character of his general style, iii. 15. 56. His epistolary writings, 62.
Sentence, in language, definition of, i. 237. Distinguished into long and short, 238. A variety in, to be studied, 241. The properties essential to a perfect sentence, 242. A principal rule for arranging the members of, 243. Position of adverbs, *ibid.* And relative pronouns, 246. Unity of a sentence, rules for preserving, 251. Pointing, 258. Parentheses, *ibid.* Should always be brought to a perfect close, 260. Strength, 262. Should be cleared of redundancies, 264. Due attention to particles recommended, 265. The omission of particles sometimes connects objects closer together, 268. Directions for placing the important words, 271. Climax, 276. A like order necessary to be observed in all assertions or propositions, 279. Sentences ought not to conclude with a feeble word, *ibid.* Fundamental rule in the construction of, 286. Sound not to be disregarded, 288. Two circumstances to be attended to for producing harmony in, 289, 299. Rules of the ancient rhetoricians for this purpose, 292. Why harmony much less studied now than formerly, 294. English words cannot be so exactly measured by metrical feet as those of Greek and Latin, 298. What is required for the musical close of a sentence, 303. Unmeaning words introduced merely to round a sentence, a great blemish, *ibid.* Sounds ought to be adapted to sense, 307.
Sermons, English, compared with French, ii. 205. Unity an indispensable requisite in, 285. The subject ought to be precise and particular, 287. The subject not to be exhausted, 288. Cautions against dryness, 290; and against conforming to fashionable modes of preaching, 292. Style, 293. Quaint expressions, 295. Whether best to be written

or delivered extempore, 296. Delivery, 297. Remarks on French sermons, 298. Cause of the dry argumentative style of English sermons, 303. General observations, 305. Remarks on the proper divisions of, 358. Conclusion, 394. Delivery, 397.

Sevigné, madam de, character of her Letters, iii. 69.

Shaftesbury, lord, observations on his style, i. 223. 241. 256. 273. 275. 306. 362. His general character as a writer, ii. 39.

Shakespeare, the merit of his plays examined, i. 45. Was not possessed of a refined taste, 49. Instance of his improper use of metaphor, 351. 358. Exhibits passions in the language of nature, iii. 313. His character as a tragic poet, 326. As a comic poet, 349.

Shenstone, his pastoral ballad, iii. 124.

Shepherd, the proper character of, in pastoral description, iii. 116.

Sheridan, his distinction between ideas and emotions, ii. 414. *note.*

Sherlock, bishop, fine instance of personification cited from his sermons, i. 380. A happy allusion cited from his sermons, ii. 295. *note.*

Silius Italicus, his sublime representation of Hannibal, i. 62. *note.*

Simile, distinguished from metaphor, i. 342. 397. Sources of the pleasure they afford, *ibid.* Two kinds of, 398. Requisites in, 401. Rules for, 403. Local propriety to be adhered to in, 406.

Simplicity applied to style, different senses of the term, ii. 30.

Smollet, improper use of figurative style, cited from, i. 349. *note.*

Solomon's Song, descriptive beauties of, iii. 158.

Songs, Runic, the origin of Gothic history, iii. 86.

Sophists of Greece, rise and character of, ii. 175.

Sophocles, the plots of his tragedies remarkably simple, iii. 286, Excelled in the pathetic, 312. His character as a tragic poet, 318.

Sorrow, why the emotions of, excited by tragedy, communicate pleasure, iii. 292.

Sounds, of an awful nature, affect us with sublimity, i. 54. Influence of in the formation of words, 117.

Speaker, public, must be directed more by his ear than by rules, i. 299.

Spectator, general character of that publication, ii. 54. Critical examination of those papers that treat of the pleasures of imagination, 56.

Speech, the powers of, the distinguishing privilege of mankind, i. 1. The grammatical division of, into eight parts, not

logical, 160. Of the ancients, regulated by musical rules, 294.

Strada, his character as an historian, iii. 46.

Style in language defined, i. 212. The difference of in different countries, 213. The qualities of a good style, *ibid.* Perspicuity, 214. Obscurity, owing to indistinct conceptions, 215. Three requisite qualities in perspicuity, 216. Precision, *ibid.* A loose style, from what it proceeds, 221. Too great an attention to precision renders a style dry and barren, 236. French distinction of style, 239. The characters of, flow from peculiar modes of thinking, ii. 7. Different subjects require a different style, 8. Ancient distinctions of, 9. The different kinds of, 10. Concise and diffusive, on what occasions proper, 11. Nervous and feeble, 16. A harsh style, from what it proceeds, 18, Æra of the formation of our present style, *ibid.* Dry manner described, 21. A plain style, *ibid.* Neat style, 24. Elegant style, 25. Florid style, 26. Natural style, 29. Different senses of the term simplicity, 30. The Greek writers distinguished for simplicity, 34. Vehement style, 42. General directions how to attain a good style, 46. Imitation dangerous, 50. Style not to be studied to the neglect of thoughts, 51. Critical examination of those papers in the Spectator that treat of the pleasures of imagination, 56. Critical examination of a passage in Swift's writings, 136. General observations, 157. See *Eloquence*.

Sublimity, of external objects, and sublimity in writing, distinguished, i. 52. Its impressions, 53. Of space, 54. Of sounds, *ibid.* Violence of the elements, 55. Solemnity bordering on the terrible, *ibid.* Obscurity, not unfavourable to, 57. In building, 59. Heroism, 60. Great virtue, 61. Whether there is any one fundamental quality in the sources of sublime, 63.

Sublimity in writing defined, i. 66. Errors in Longinus pointed out, 67. The most ancient writers afford the most striking instances of sublimity, 69. Sublime representation of the Deity in Psalm xviii. 70. And in the prophet Habakkuk, *ibid.* In Moses and Isaiah, 71. Instances of sublimity in Homer, 72. In Ossian, 74. Amplification injurious to sublimity, 75. Rhyme in English verse unfavourable to, 76. Strength essential to sublime writing, 80. A proper choice of circumstances essential to sublime description, 82. Strictures on Virgil's description of Mount Ætna, 83. The proper sources of the sublime, 85. Sublimity consists in the thought, not in the words, 87. The faults opposed to the sublime, 89.

Sully, duke de, character of his Memoirs. iii. 50.

Superstition, sublime representation of its dominion over mankind, from Lucretius, i. 58. *note.*

Swift, observations on his style, i. 218. 234. 257. 283. 307. General character of his style, ii. 22. Critical examination of the beginning of his proposal for correcting, &c. the English tongue, 136. Concluding observations, 157. His language, 438. Character of his epistolary writing, iii. 61.

Syllables, English, cannot be so exactly measured by metrical feet, as those of Greek and Latin, i. 298.

Synedoche, in figurative style, explained, i. 340.

Synonymous words, observations on, i. 226.

T

Tacitus, character of his style, iii. 12. His character as an historian, 30. His happy manner of introducing incidental observations, 32. Instance of his successful talent in historical painting, 40. His defects as a writer, 42.

Tasso, a passage from his *Gierusalemme* distinguished by the harmony of numbers, i. 312. Strained sentiments in his pastorals, iii. 117. Character of his Aminta, 125. Critical examination of this poem, 249.

Taste, true, the uses of, in common life, i. 13. Definition of, 18. Is more or less common to all men, 19. Is an improbable faculty, 21. How to be refined, 23. Is assisted by reason, 25. A good heart requisite to a just taste, 26. Delicacy and correctness the characters of perfect taste, 27. Whether there be any standard of taste, 30. The diversity of, on different men, no evidence of their tastes being corrupted, 31. The test of, referred to the concurring voice of the polished part of mankind, 37. Distinguished from genius, 46. The sources of pleasure in, 50. The powers of, enlarge the sphere of our pleasures, 51. Imitation, as a source of pleasure, 105. Music, *ibid.* To what class the pleasures received from eloquence, poetry, and fine writing are to be referred, 106.

Telemachus. See *Fenelon.*

Temple, Sir William, observations on his style, i. 222. Specimens, 239. 255. 260. 267. 300. His general character as a writer, ii. 36.

Terence, beautiful instance of simplicity from, ii. 34. His character as a dramatic writer, iii. 343.

Terminations of words, the variations of, in the Greek and Latin languages, favourable to the liberty of transposition, i. 141.

Theocritus, the earliest known writer of pastorals, iii. 109. His talent in painting rural scenery, 113. Character of his pastorals, 121.

Thomson, fine passage from, where he animates all nature, i. 383. Character of his Seasons, iii. 151. His eulogium, by Dr. Johnson, 152. *note.*
Thuanus, his character as an historian, iii. 25.
Thucydides, his character as an historian, iii. 23. Was the first who introduced orations in historical narration, 42.
Tillotson, archbishop, observations on his style, i. 222. 250. 300. 351. General character of, as a writer, ii. 35.
Tones, the due management of, in public speaking, ii. 414.
Topics, among the ancient rhetoricians, explained, ii. 370.
Tragedy, how distinguished from comedy, iii. 272. More particular definition of, 273. Subject and conduct of, 275. Rise and progress of, 278. The three dramatic unities, 283. Division of the representation into acts, 287. The catastrophe, 291. Why the sorrow excited by tragedy communicates pleasure, 293. The proper idea of scenes, and how to be conducted, 295. Characters, 302. Higher degrees of morality inculcated by modern than by ancient tragedy, 306. Too great use made of the passion of love, on the modern stages, *ibid.* All tragedies expected to be pathetic, 307. The proper use of moral reflections in, 313. The proper style and versification of, 315. Brief view of the Greek stage, 316. French tragedy, 321. English tragedy, 326. Concluding observations, 330.
Tropes, a definition of, i. 319. Origin of, 324. The rhetorical distinctions among, frivolous, 337.
Turnus, the character of, not favourably treated in the Æneid, iii 237.
Turpin, archbishop of Rheims, a romance writer, iii. 74.
Typographical figures of speech, what, i. 416.

V

Vanbrugh, his character as a dramatic writer, iii. 352.
Verbs, their nature and office explained, i. 184. No sentence complete without a verb expressed or implied, 185. The tenses, 186. The advantage of English over the Latin, in the variety of tenses, 187. Active and passive, 188. Are the most artificial and complex of all the parts of speech, 189.
Verse, blank, more favourable to sublimity than rhyme, i. 78. Instructions for the reading of, ii. 411. Construction of, iii. 102.
Virgil, instances of sublimity in, i. 56, 81, 83. Of harmony, 313. 315. Simplicity of language, 322. Figurative language, 339. 378. 391. Specimens of his pastoral descriptions, iii. 111. *note.* 118. Character of his pastoral, 121. His Georgics, a perfect model of didactic poetry, 139. The principal beauties in the Georgics, 141. Beautiful descrip-

tions in his Æneid, 159. Critical examination of that poem, 233. Compared with Homer, 240.

Virtue, high degrees of, a source of the sublime, i. 61. A necessary ingredient to form an eloquent orator, ii. 427.

Vision, the figure of speech so termed, in what it consists, i. 416.

Unities, dramatic, the advantages of adhering to, iii. 283. Why the moderns are less restricted to the unities of time and place than the ancients, 297.

Voice, the powers of, to be studied in public speaking, ii. 400.

Voiture, character of his epistolary writings, iii. 69.

Voltaire, his character as an historian, ii. 52. Critical examination of his Henriade, 261. His argument for the use of rhyme in dramatic compositions, 316. His character as a tragic poet, 324.

Vossius, Joannes Gerardus, character of his writings on eloquence, ii. 443.

W

Waller, the first English poet who brought couplets into vogue, iii. 106.

Wit is to be very sparingly used at the bar, ii. 257.

Words, obsolete, and new coined, incongruous with purity of style, i. 216. Bad consequences of their being ill chosen, 219. Observations on those termed synonymous, 226. Considered with reference to sound, 290.

Words and things, instances of the analogy between, i. 118.

Writers of genius, why they have been more numerous in one age than in another, iii. 3. Four happy ages of, pointed out, *ibid.*

Writing, two kinds of, distinguished, i. 144. Pictures, the first essay in, 145. Hieroglyphics the second, *ibid.* Chinese characters, 149. Arithmetical figures, 150. The considerations which led to the invention of an alphabet, 151. Cadmus's alphabet, the origin of that now used, 154. Historical account of the materials used to receive writing, 155. General remarks, 156. See *Grammar*.

Y

Young, Dr. his poetical character, i. 363. Too fond of antitheses, 410. The merit of his works examined, iii. 147. His character as a tragic poet, 330.

THE END.

J. & C. Muirhead, Printers, Edinburgh.